

**ECHOING GOD’S WORD
IN THE
CATHOLIC FAITH COMMUNITY**

**EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME
August 4, 2024**

SCRIPTURES:

Exodus: 16:2-4, 12-15	God feeds the people with quail and manna.
Ephesians 4:17, 20-24	Put away the old ways now that you are in Christ.
John 6:24-35	Jesus is the Bread of Life.
Psalms 78:3-4, 23-25, 54	God has always provided for the people.

READ THE SCRIPTURES:

Read the Scriptures carefully in your group beginning with the Gospel. Take a few minutes in silence to hear the Lord speaking to the heart. Remember that the word of God in the Bible is primarily addressed to the Church community. What does God want the community to hear today?

SCRIPTURE BACKGROUND:

Exodus:

The people of Israel complained against God many times in their journey from Egypt to the Promised Land. They remembered not their slavery but only the good food that had been theirs in bondage. They wanted some of this same food. God heard their cry and gave them quail and manna in the desert. The manna was a white, powdery substance that formed when the dew dried off certain plants. However, God gave them only enough for one day at a time, thus helping the people acknowledge their utter dependence on God.

Ephesians:

Continuing the ethical consequences of Christian faith begun in last week’s passage, Paul points out that the new life in Christ raises the Christian to new responsibilities of ethical behaviors.

John:

Launching into the Bread of Life Discourse, Jesus uses a structure that was typical for teaching rabbis: the clarification of a misunderstanding and the answering of a question on a level higher than that of the question. “When did you come here?” is answered on the level of a religious response. It is not just a question about dates and calendars. Jesus responds on the level of his divine origins.

“Rabbi” (Teacher) was the title given to Jesus by strangers. Those who were not his disciples called him “teacher.”

Jesus identifies himself as “Son of Man ... from Heaven.” *Son of Man* is a Hebrew expression which means *the One who is the Most Human among all the humans*. Yet, this *Son of Man* is not originally of the earth; he comes from heaven; his origin is in God.

When asked about the faith-works controversy, Jesus replies that faith is the work both of God and of the Christian. There is no separation between the two. Faith here means acceptance of God’s work in Jesus Christ.

The people want Jesus to give them bread like Moses gave his people. Is he not a “prophet like Moses”? Jesus recalls for them that the real bread that Moses gave them was the teaching (Torah) of God. Jesus has already given them the new teaching. What more can they want?

Jesus begins to use the great “I AM.” In the Jewish Scriptures, this word is the very name of God. Jesus identifies himself with this name. John will go on to use this expression with many identifiers: Bread of Life; Light of the World; Door; Good Shepherd; Resurrection and Life; Way, Truth and Life; True Vine. In John’s Gospel, Jesus is intimately related to the Most High God. He claims the title of God’s very name, the great “I AM.”

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What are some of the human needs in our lives today that prompt us to seek Jesus like the people of his times did? Why do you go to Jesus and ask his help? What are your needs? People who lived on the edge of starvation asked for food. What do you ask for? When you celebrate the Eucharist, do you seek other things beyond food for the stomach?

2. Discuss the “One Day at a Time” characteristic of God’s providence. In the Lord’s Prayer, we ask only for the needs of *today*. Why can we not be trusted with more than we need for one day? Tomorrow is not here yet. God provides enough for today. Why is it that we crave more than what we need *today*?

3. “What exactly does God want us to do?” (John 6:28) Do you suppose this question is more of an avoidance technique rather than an honest desire to know what God wants? Apply that to the Church today. The most important work of the Church is to “believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.” Do you see the Church primarily involved in the work of *believing*? What evidence is there that believing in Jesus is the work of the Church?

PRAYER

Lord Jesus, your bread gives us life.

Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, your truth gives us freedom.

Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, your love gives us the kingdom.

Lord, have mercy.

CATHOLIC DOCTRINE

“You just don’t get it!” is what we often say to some who simply don’t want to understand. Jesus seems to have responded in this way to those who were seeking after him for the wrong reasons.

The Christian community has a responsibility to articulate its teachings and its beliefs concisely and accurately. People have a right to know where the Church stands on issues of faith and morals. The response must be clear and authoritative. This is given by those who have the authorization to teach and preach in the Church.

Thus, came the new *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. In response to many requests for an updated summary of Catholic Church's beliefs, practices, teachings, and policies, the *catechism* was conceived and produced under the unique authority of the Holy Father, the pope, who is the universal teacher of the whole Church.

More than six years in the making, the *catechism* brings together most of the major doctrines of the Church as articulated in the renewal of Vatican II and in major pronouncements since then. We will seek to draw from the *catechism* and to quote from its pages the appropriate texts that explain particular points raised by the lessons from the Lectionary of the Church.

The Church has a heritage of responses to the Bible text that it has proclaimed for the past 2,000 years. These responses, both in its teachings and in its practices, form the body of evidence, a cohesive collection of lived experiences from which the Church draws to teach each new generation. Some of this heritage is found in the *catechism*, a book that does not replace the Bible but, rather, a book offered to illustrate and illuminate the Bible. The *catechism* cannot be a substitute for the Scripture but must only teach the Scriptures more clearly.

The Catechism: # 888-892

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