



Bringing Home the Word

Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time | August 5, 2018

True Bread from Heaven

By Mary Katharine Deeley

Where does food come from? In an effort to teach our children that food didn't come from grocery stores, my husband and I helped them plant tomatoes, cucumbers, and green beans in our back yard. The yield was small, but the reward was great as they tasted the work of their hands. We had somewhat more difficulty explaining the source of our protein, though they did learn how to fish. We cooked what they caught. I think they grew to appreciate

the hard work it took to put food on the table. We also learned the importance of sharing what we had by cooking for others and collecting canned goods for our local pantry.

The Israelites in the desert also wondered where food was going to come from. The desert they wandered through was a far cry from Egypt. They forgot their enslavement and remembered only the food that they had, which seemed like a banquet compared to what the desert provided. There was nothing to plant and no place to plant it. The Israelites had to rely solely on God, but God did not disappoint. First he sent quail, then a miraculous bread that was as much as they needed. It was a lesson in faith we all need to learn.

As city dwellers, we have grown to rely on the farmers, butchers, and fishermen who supply our daily food. As Christians, we again must rely solely on God for our spiritual nourishment. He sent us his Son, Jesus, who is the true bread from heaven. If we come to him, we will never hunger. +

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Sunday Readings

Exodus 16:2-4, 12-15

[The Lord said,] in the morning you will have your fill of bread, and then you will know that I, the LORD, am your God.

Ephesians 4:17, 20-24

You should put away the old self of your former way of life, corrupted through deceitful desires.

John 6:24-35

[Jesus said,] "You are looking for me not because you saw signs but because you ate the loaves and were filled."

A Word From Pope Francis

Although there are many reasons to be discouraged, amid many prophets of destruction and condemnation, and so many negative and despairing voices, may you be a positive force, salt and light for this society....May you be sowers of hope, builders of bridges, and agents of dialogue and harmony.

—Meeting with priests, religious, and seminarians, April 29, 2017



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

- Is my faith strong enough to believe God will provide everything I need?
- Do I place as much importance on my spiritual nourishment as I do on physical food?



Living Large

By Kathy Coffey

"Do not worry about your life, what you will eat [or drink], or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?" (Matthew 6:25).

When Jesus tells us not to worry about food or clothes, he cuts close to home. In their book *Sleeping With Bread*, Dennis, Matthew, and Sheila Linn describe the psychic importance of food.

Children traumatized by bombings in Holland during World War II escaped to refuges, but had trouble sleeping at night. The staff caring for them finally discovered a solution: The children were given a small loaf of bread on going to bed. Holding it in their hands, they could sleep. The subconscious message was clear: I ate yesterday and today. I will eat tomorrow. I am secure now, and I can sleep.

In the Christian tradition, the meal has profound significance. When he wants us to remember him, Jesus asks us to consume bread and wine. He refers to himself as the nurturing bread of life. Similarly, the Bible exalts the symbolic significance of clothing. Isaiah describes God clothing us with garments of salvation (61:10).

Perhaps Jesus deliberately chooses two things that are important—not just physically but spiritually. We live in a throwaway era: diapers, razors, and pens are disposable.

Getting to the Heart of It

We grow careless about many things, but at some level we still cherish food and clothing. Some of us spend considerable time planning nourishing meals. Likewise, a key question for many women before a big event is "what to wear?" So it's tempting to ask Jesus: "Couldn't you just tell us to worry less about obvious consumerism?" If he'd tell us not to worry about our Porsche, this would be easier to swallow.

Exactly. Jesus uses vital things to prove that life is more than even these. We all remember letting go—when the dinner burned, but we laughed, improvised another menu, and had fun. There is more to enjoying a wedding than what we wear. And at our most vulnerable times, for birth or making love, we wear nothing at all.

Pyramid Model

Perhaps Jesus is showing us a hierarchy. At the top of the pyramid is our relationship with God, enjoying the surprises God sends when we quit trying to control our lives. Next comes our relationship with others. When we think of those dear to us, we remember their kindness or their humor—but rarely their wardrobes. Then we might

consider God's creation. Appreciating the sanctuary that surrounds us, we become caught up in the majesty of an oak, the shadings of the sea, or the roar of a waterfall. Indeed, all of these rank higher on the pyramid than food or clothes.

Perhaps Jesus is speaking from the exasperation we feel when a friend seems stuck in detail. "C'mon!" we want to say. "There's more to life than your work deadline, your diet, or your chores. Focus on the bigger question: Am I loving God and the people placed in my path?"

It may not be food or clothing, but we all have something blocking our path to God. Are we reluctant to let go of our cherished ideas and be broadened by another's? Do we monitor our calendar apps, never allowing an interruption in our schedules? Do we fear change, risk, or speaking out?

If so, then Jesus invites us to fuller life. "C'mon!" he says. "Let me show you what I have in mind—so much grander and better than your narrow niche, your comfy routine. Follow me to larger life." +

PRAYER

Lord, you are the bread of love, compassion, and peace. Strengthen me with this bread so I can serve others.

*From Faithful Meditations
for Every Day in Ordinary Time,
Rev. Warren J. Savage
and Mary Ann McSweeney*

WEEKDAY READINGS

August 6–11 2018

Monday, Transfiguration of the Lord:
Dn 7:9–10, 13–14 / 2 Pt 1:16–19 / Mk 9:2–10

Tuesday, Weekday: Jer 30:1–2, 12–15, 18–22 /
Mt 14:22–36 or Mt 15:1–2, 10–14

Wednesday, St. Dominic:
Jer 31:1–7 / Mt 15:21–2

Thursday, Weekday:
Jer 31:31–34 / Mt 16:13–23

Friday, St. Lawrence:
2 Cor 9:6–10 / Jn 12:24–26

Saturday, St. Clare:
Hb 1:12–2:4 / Mt 17:14–20

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