

[Readings: Ex. 16:2-4, 12-15; Ps. 69; Eph. 4:17, 20-24; John 6:24-35]

Announce passing of long-time cantor Walter Adamczyk and minimal flood damage on church basement floor.

In today's First Reading, the escapees from Egypt see marvelous things in the desert – the cloud of fire, the smoke on Mount Sinai, the water from the rock, and yes, even their very freedom from slavery. Yet they do not sense the presence of God among them, caring for them! And so they complain, and about what? Food, of course! So, God gives them manna. After the dew evaporates in the morning, something like coriander seed, from the carrot family, appears. God gives them “carrot cake” for breakfast! And still they complain about “this wretched food.” So, God, aware of the laws of nature, guides the quail returning from their spring migration to Europe exhausted on the desert sands. Easily scooped up, they provide ready food for the traveler. The word “manna” comes from the Hebrew question, “What is this?” What is this, indeed that God provides for the people day in and day out? Today's Responsorial Psalm says that God “rained manna upon them for food and gave them bread from heaven.”

Think of that at Communion time when you return to your pew. You have just received the Bread of Angels. The Bread from Heaven. But that bread does not only “come down from Heaven. It rises from the soil in the form of bread and wine and from the very Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ, and rises up BACK to Heaven!

Manna from Heaven is what we're all waiting for. But we keep looking up to the sky to find it, instead of in the Body of Christ in the Eucharist, as well as in our sisters and brothers.

In what ways do YOU hunger and thirst? How can others, through God's ways of holiness and truth, fulfill your needs? How can YOU fulfill the needs of others?

Jesus tells us that the work of God is to believe in the one he sent. How strong is YOUR belief in Jesus? What could strengthen your faith?

Think about a time when you felt really famished -- your stomach growling and your head light. Imagine living a lifetime with that level of hunger. Pray for those whose hunger is not satisfied. And feed the poor.

Imagine a SPIRITUAL hunger at that same level of intensity. Perhaps those hungry souls are part of our parish or the larger community. Maybe in your own family and in your own home.

Pray for yourself and them to find fulfillment in Jesus.

God once again feeds the people of Israel. Ironically, the name "Israel" can be translated as "the people who contended and fought with God." Can you imagine OUR country with such a name? They are aptly named. And for being so stiff-necked and complaining, God allows them to wander in the desert for forty years.

Why forty years? Because this insures that everyone from the original generation of refugees from Egypt would die or would eventually die in the desert.

Thankfully, Jesus Christ does not let us wander aimlessly in today's worldly darkness. The bread, the miraculous bread that He gives to the crowds and that He gives to us, is the sign that we all want, that we all need, to see that He is here with us, and that we need to prevent our inner darkness from matching and melding with the darkness outside.

Every celebration of the Mass keeps our eyes open and clear so that we can always be sure of the road to the Kingdom of God.

Regarding our Second Reading from St. Paul, Mark Twain once wrote, "I have known many troubles in my life, most of which never happened." I know about such troubles, too. These are the troubles looming just out in the future that occupy my mind in unguarded moments throughout the day or especially as I try to drift off to sleep.

I can worry about world problems a little and local problems even more so. But the problems that keep me up the most are parishioner and family problems. Or at least I portray them as problems in my mind.

I have also worried about budgets and staff concerns, roofs leaking and basements flooding and paint peeling and black mold and rightly so.

Remember the historic floods of ten years ago? We had another taste of it this week. The church basement flooded, but not the four feet we got in 2014. Just a light

rinse! Remember what I had you say before my homily ten years ago? I had only been here for six weeks, and Fr. Roman was at St. Lawrence Parish. Before my homily the following weekend, at the count of three, I instructed the congregation to say, "This never happened when Fr. Roman was here!" You shouted that! Remember? And that's when I fell in love with you. And, I hope, you with me!

Saint Paul warns the Ephesians in our Second Reading, "You must no longer live in the futility of your mind." He wants them and us to "put away the old self" and "be renewed in the spirit of your minds."

The brain is imperfect, inefficient, untidy and easily distracted. It also has the unnerving tendency to forget things whenever we're trying to remember something important. I remember words and people's name five seconds after they have walked away. You, too?

Our thoughts often run in circles like a hamster on its wheel, getting nowhere in a big hurry. Do you agree? Many is the afternoon I'd just like to hang up my brain like an old hat and be rid of the madness within, if only for a few hours. After all, isn't that why God invented television? Changing the channel is precisely what the Letter to the Ephesians urges on us here. But it's not mindless escapism to which we're invited, though, but "fresh, spiritual thinking."

The empty-headed might follow the hamster around on his wheel, but those who've "learned Christ" have access to the truth that sets us free from more of the same. The lesson we learn in Christ isn't just a moral teaching, or even a whole catalog of instructions. We learn a Way, THE Way – discipleship -- which involves listening to Christ, and forming a relationship with Him.

This week, find a quiet place to calm down, sit down and quiet down, so that we can hear the voice of Jesus above the roar of stuff in the brain that's always trying to drag us back into circular ways of thinking and behaving.

We have options, of course. We can pattern ourselves after the grumblers in the Exodus wilderness. Conditions in life don't meet our expectations; our seemingly unheard prayers are not answered as we would like, and so we get worked up about it.

God responds to the Israelites through Moses – and to us through Jesus Christ --

with something beyond our wildest dreams, and the mumbling quiets down. Until the next time.

When worries come and you are living in the futility of your mind, turn your worry over to God, who loves you even more than you love your own family. Then get a good night's sleep. Like Pope Saint John XXIII. Every night, he would kneel next to his bed in the papal bedroom, and say these words: "Almighty God, I have spent this long day solving all the problems of the Church. I am tired and I am going to bed. You take over while I sleep!"

Mortal thoughts are never far from looking back in the past, or fretting about the future. Yet fresh, spiritual thinking gets our minds off mere maintaining, and launches us into creative considerations of why we're given this life to begin with.

Discover Christ, and learn a new Way of seeing, believing, loving and living. "Lord, give us this food always!" AMEN!