



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. +

The Israelites had to rely solely on God, but God did not disappoint.

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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Bringing Home the Word

Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time | August 12, 2018

Stop Murmuring and Go to God

By Mary Katharine Deeley

I have a clear memory of leaning over to the classmate in the next row and complaining about an assignment we had just been given. I wasn't the only one. Throughout the classroom, pairs of heads came together in a wave of rolling eyes and muttered remarks. I suppose we thought it went unnoticed. "Is there anything you would like to share with the rest of the class?" the teacher asked. "No, thank you," was the general response. We were a little embarrassed at having been found out.

That long-ago recollection surfaced as I read that the crowd "murmured" when Jesus said that he was the bread that came down from heaven. The word is also used of the Israelites who "murmured" about their hunger in the desert. Jesus calls them out by answering the question they thought he didn't hear. When he explains that he is greater than the manna that kept them alive in the desert, they can't believe their ears. They couldn't see that Jesus was far more than they understood him to be and they did not have faith in him because of that.

Has there ever been a time when you have murmured to yourself or someone else about God? Maybe God called you to ministry and you didn't believe him. Maybe he asked you to give up something and you complained like I did in that class of years past. Maybe you think God has been unfair to you. Save your breath; God hears you. Instead, go to him. Pour out your questions and fears and, with an open and willing heart, listen to the promise of life he alone can give you. +

Sunday Readings

1 Kings 19:4-8

[Elijah] prayed for death: "Enough, LORD! Take my life, for I am no better than my ancestors."

Ephesians 4:30-5:2

So be imitators of God, as beloved children, and live in love, as Christ loved us and handed himself over for us.

John 6:41-51

[Jesus said,] "I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever."

A Word From Pope Francis

In Jesus his Son, God has come down among us. He took flesh and showed his solidarity with humanity in all things but sin.... He saw and embraced all of creation. But he did more than just see; he touched people's lives, he spoke to them, helped them and showed kindness to those in need.

—World Day of Peace, January 1, 2016



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

QUESTIONS REFLECTION

- Rather than murmur, do I accept what God has in mind for me?
- Do I regularly pour out my questions and fears to God?

***Have you ever murmured to yourself or someone about God?
Stop. Go to him.***



We're All on the Same Team

By Fr. Thomas Richstatter, OFM

Being Catholic is a team effort. God's dreams for the world are too great for any of us to accomplish on our own. But we don't have to do it alone. We have the support of the saints.

When we use the title *saint* we usually think of men and women of exceptional holiness. But being a saint isn't the exception; it's the rule. We are *all* called to be saints. As members of Christ's body we are in communion with the other members of that body, living and dead; we participate in the communion of saints. Sainthood (holiness) is the essential element of Catholic identity!

The saints, living and dead, offer us encouragement and support. We celebrate each Eucharist in union with the local Church—the living saints—and in union with Mary, Joseph her husband, Peter and Paul, Andrew, James, and John. We celebrate in the fellowship of Agatha, Lucy, Agnes, and Cecelia “on whose constant intercession we rely for help.” Saints of the present and past surround us. They intercede for us, praying to God on our behalf.

God's message of “I love you” has been heard in every age and country. Throughout the liturgical year we celebrate the memory of saints from

every continent and era to show how God has been at work in human lives. This great diversity reminds us that while Jesus' invitation to “follow me” remains constant, each of us must work out the details of how the Holy Spirit is active in the circumstances of our particular situations.

God's Instruments

When we celebrate the feasts of the saints, we are often amazed by their extraordinary achievements and sacrifices. But in recalling their memory we don't celebrate what *they* accomplished. Rather we rejoice at the wonderful things *God* accomplished through them. Our attention and prayers are always directed to God. It is God's strengths and gifts that we see reflected in the lives of these holy people.

We learn this Catholic focus on God from the greatest example of God's holiness shining forth in humanity: Mary. Jesus' mother proclaims, “My soul magnifies *the Lord*, and my spirit rejoices *in God*.” If anyone could brag about having done wonderful things for God, it would be Mary. But she has us look to the Mighty One who “has done great things for me.”

Mary, Our Model

Like Mary, we bear Christ in our bodies through baptism and Eucharist. We bring forth Christ to the world by our word and example. Mary's virginity points us to single-minded devotion to the will of God. Her sinlessness is a model for the Church, a reminder that we are to be God's holy people, God's saints. Mary's assumption into heaven foretells our own destiny as Church. Where she is, we one day hope to be.

In Mary we see a perfect example of how God acts. It is as though God depends on our cooperation for the salvation of the world. God waited for Mary's consent, Mary's “let it be with me according to your word,” to take flesh and come among us. Mary is the model of all holiness, for the essence of holiness is saying yes to God's will as we hear and understand it.

The communion of saints is integral to our Catholic identity. Being Catholic is a team effort. With Mary and all the saints on our team, we can be certain that God's dreams for the world will ultimately be accomplished. +



Lord, you give us your Spirit to renew the earth. Instill in my heart the spirit of love, compassion, forgiveness, and peace, that I may be a source of healing.

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

WEEKDAY READINGS

August 13–18, 2018

Monday, Weekday:

Ez 1:2–5, 24–28c / Mt 17:22–27

Tuesday, St. Maximilian Kolbe:

Ez 2:8–3:4 / Mt 18:1–5, 10, 12–14

Wednesday, Assumption of the Blessed

Virgin Mary: Rv 11:19a; 12:1–6a, 10ab /
1 Cor 15:20–27 / Lk 1:39–56

Thursday, Weekday:

Ez 12:1–12 / Mt 18:21–19:1

Friday, Weekday: Ez 16:1–15, 60, 63
or Ez 16:59–63 / Mt 19:3–12

Saturday, Weekday:

Ez 18:1–10, 13b, 30–32 / Mt 19:13–15

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Bringing Home the Word

Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time | August 19, 2018

Christ, Our Spiritual Food

By Mary Katharine Deeley

I have a clear memory of leaning over to the classmate in the next row and complaining about an assignment we had just been given. I wasn't the only one. Throughout the classroom, pairs of heads came together in a wave of rolling eyes and muttered remarks. I suppose we thought it went unnoticed. "Is there anything you would like to share with the rest of the class?" the teacher asked. "No, thank you," was the general response. We were a little embarrassed at having been found out.

Sunday Readings

Proverbs 9:1-6

[Wisdom says,] "To any who lack sense I say, Come, eat of my food, and drink of the wine I have mixed!"

Ephesians 5:15-20

Therefore, do not continue in ignorance, but try to understand what is the will of the Lord.

John 6:51-58

[Jesus said,] I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever.

That long-ago recollection surfaced as I read that the crowd "murmured" when Jesus said that he was the bread that came down from heaven. The word is also used of the Israelites who "murmured" about their hunger in the desert. Jesus calls them out by answering the question they thought he didn't hear. When he explains that he is greater than the manna that kept them alive in the desert, they can't believe their ears. They couldn't see that Jesus was far more than they understood him to be and they did not have faith in him because of that.

Has there ever been a time when you have murmured to yourself or someone else about God? Maybe God called you to ministry and you didn't believe him. Maybe he asked you to give up something and you complained like I did in that class of years past. Maybe you think God has been unfair to you. Save you breath; God hears you. Instead, go to him. Pour out your questions and fears and, with an open and willing heart, listen to the promise of life he alone can give you. +

***No famine, sword,
or persecution
can touch our
spiritual food, Christ.***

A Word From Pope Francis

Amid the din of so many voices, the Lord asks us to distinguish between what is from him and what is from the false spirit....to distinguish the word of wisdom that God speaks to us each day from the shouting of those who seek in God's name to frighten, to nourish division and fear.

—Jubilee for socially excluded people,
November 13, 2016



REFLECTION
QUESTIONS
QUESTIONS
REFLECTION

- Do I regularly attend Mass to receive Christ, our spiritual food?
- Do I share Christ's message of love with others?