

ST. THOMAS INDIAN MISSION

18th Sunday in
Ordinary Time, B
August 1, 2021

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Fr. George "of the desert" Decasa
Pastor

Entrance Hymn: : 793 —
Table of Plenty.
Holy Communion: 820 —
One Bread, One Body.

SATURDAYS:

3:15 pm to 4:15 pm – Holy Hour
3:45 pm to 4:15 pm – Confessions
4:30 pm – HOLY MASS

SUNDAYS:

7:15 am to 8:15 am – Holy Hour
7:45 am to 8:15 am – Confessions
8:30 am – HOLY MASS

Excerpts from Bishop McElroy's recent letter to all priests on upcoming efforts towards Eucharistic renewal:

My Dear Brother Priest:

“ . . . I am writing to you today because a central element of our renewal after the pandemic must be a deepening of our people's understanding of the Eucharist as the source and summit of the life of the Church. Two major problems confront us:

The first is one of knowledge. The Pew study of Catholics two years ago revealed an alarming lack of basic understanding about the meaning of this Blessed Sacrament and the Real Presence. Even before the pandemic began, the diocese was moving toward a broad catechesis on the Eucharist to address this profound lack of knowledge.

The second challenge we face about the Eucharist is the reality that each of you faces weekly in your parishes: the experience of the pandemic has diminished our people's affective attachment to the Eucharist and their appreciation for the imperative to attend Mass weekly to honor God, form a community of faith, and nourish their spiritual lives.

As a result of these twin challenges . . . it is imperative to have a deep catechetical and spiritual moment in the life of our local Church centering upon the meaning and experience of the Eucharist as we enter the Fall.”

For these reasons, Bishop McElroy says that a seven-week period of Eucharistic renewal will be observed beginning on September 12th. For three Sundays in September a series of video-taped homilies will be presented in every parish, of which the first topic is “The Eucharist is a Direct Personal Encounter with Jesus Christ.” Then, on October 3rd, each pastor will be asked to give a homily for his people at all Masses speaking to specific elements of the Eucharist that are important for his community.

“As a follow-up,” Bishop McElroy continues, “on the weekends of October 10th, 17th, and 24th, all of the priests celebrating Mass in our parishes will be asked to celebrate teaching Masses, a format which explains during the Mass a different part of the Eucharistic celebration each week as it takes place. . . .”

“Finally, in early November, we would invite parishes to provide some type of parish mission on the Eucharist for those parishioners who are willing to go further in their renewal. The diocese will provide alternative option and resources for such a mission.”

The way we celebrate our Sunday Masses — each preceded by a Holy Hour, together with the use of Bulletin that focuses on reflections on the readings, is meant to facilitate the creation of an atmosphere for an authentic direct, personal encounter with the Lord, Risen Christ, the Bread of Life:

In the Eucharist—the source par excellence. Sadly it's easy for receiving the Eucharist to become mechanical, done with Little thought or with our thoughts somewhere else. We can make communion more meaningful by thinking of what is happening: direct personal encounter with the Son Of God. It is for this reason too that henceforth, we observe silence during and after Communion before we sing a hymn of thanksgiving.

In the Scriptures. It's a great help to have read and thought about the readings before hearing them at Mass. Come to the Holy Hour before the Mass for a private direct encounter with the Lord.

COLLECTIONS:

July 24-25 : \$881.00
Via Online: July 23-27:
\$345.00



**The Mystery of Faith:
We proclaim your Death,
O Lord, and profess your
Resurrection, until you
come again.**

THE READINGS. . . SOME REFLECTIONS. . . AND GUIDEPOSTS.

Introduction to the Liturgy of the Word

We hear Jesus (in today's Gospel) tell the crowds that he is the bread of life, that those who look to him will never hunger or thirst. Before that (in the first reading), we hear the Lord satisfy the hunger of the Chosen People when they were starving in the desert. In between (in the second reading), Saint Paul challenges us to change from our old self and "put on (our) new self" now that we have learned the truth in Jesus. Listening to today's readings, let us reflect on how God satisfies our hunger.

First Reading: Exodus 16:2-4, 12-15

²The whole Israelite community grumbled against Moses and Aaron. ³The Israelites said to them, "Would that we had died at the Lord's hand in the land of Egypt, as we sat by our fleshpots and ate our fill of bread! But you had to lead us into this desert to make the whole community die of famine!"

⁴Then the Lord said to Moses, "I will now rain down bread from heaven for you. Each day the people are to go out and gather their daily portion; thus will I test them, to see whether they follow my instructions or not.

¹²"I have heard the grumbling of the Israelites. Tell them: In the evening twilight you shall eat flesh, and in the morning, you shall have your fill of bread, so that you may know that I, the Lord, am your God."

¹³In the evening quail came up and covered the camp. In the morning a dew lay all about the camp, ¹⁴and when the dew evaporated, there on the surface of the desert were fine flakes like hoarfrost on the ground. ¹⁵On seeing it, the Israelites asked one another, "What is this?" for they did not know what it was. But Moses told them, "This is the bread that the Lord has given you to eat."

The Word of the Lord.

Responsorial Psalm

(Psalms 78:3-4, 23-24, 25, 54)

"The Lord gave them bread from heaven."

³What we have heard and know, and what our fathers have declared to us, ⁴We will declare to the generation to come the glorious deeds of the Lord and his strength and the wonders that he wrought.

R.

²³He commanded the skies above and opened the doors of heaven; ²⁴he rained manna upon them for food and gave them heavenly bread.

R.

²⁵Man ate the bread of angels, food he sent them in Abundance. ⁵⁴And he brought them to his holy land, to

the mountains his right hand had won. **R.**

Second Reading: Ephesians 4:17, 20-24

Brothers and sisters: ¹⁷I declare and testify in the Lord that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds; ²⁰that is not how you learned Christ, ²¹assuming that you have heard of him and were taught in him, as truth is in Jesus, ²²that you should put away the old self of your former way of life, corrupted through deceitful desires, ²³and be renewed in the spirit of your minds, ²⁴and put on the new self, created in God's way in righteousness and holiness of truth. *The Word of the Lord.*

Alleluia – (Matthew 4:4b)

Lector: Alleluia, Alleluia. **All:** Alleluia, Alleluia.

Lector: ^{4b}One does not live on bread alone, but by every word that comes forth from the mouth of God.

All: Alleluia, Alleluia.

Gospel Reading: John 6:24-35

²⁴When the crowd saw that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they themselves got into boats and came to Capernaum looking for Jesus. ²⁵And when they found him across the sea they said to him, "Rabbi, when did you get here?"

²⁶Jesus answered them and said, "Amen, amen, I say to you, you are looking for me not because you saw signs but because you ate the loaves and were filled. ²⁷Do not work for food that perishes but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For on him the Father, God, has set his seal."

²⁸So they said to him, "What can we do to accomplish the works of God?" ²⁹Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in the one he sent." ³⁰So they said to him, "What sign can you do, that we may see and believe in you? What can you do? ³¹Our ancestors ate manna in the desert, as it is written:

He gave them bread from heaven to eat."

³²So Jesus said to them, "Amen, amen, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave the bread from heaven; my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. ³³For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."

³⁴So they said to him, "Sir, give us this bread always."

³⁵Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me will never hunger, and whoever believes in me will never thirst."

The Gospel of the Lord.

JESUS, THE BREAD OF LIFE, IS OUR SPIRITUAL NOURISHMENT

The First Reading and the Gospel this Sunday focus on the theme of God providing food for his people. In the First Reading, we hear the grumblings of the Israelites to Moses and Aaron because they were hungry but had no food. And God, in all patience, responded to their call, doing all he could to answer their need, causing manna to rain from heaven and quails to appear for their food.

The Israelites did not initially recognize the manna that God gave them to eat. “What is this?” they asked when seeing the flakes that resembled frost (Exodus 16:15). (In fact, the Hebrew, *man hû*, is translated as “What is it?”) They failed to recognize the Lord’s hand in answering their need. They failed even to recognize that this was food. It seems difficult to believe, considering how hungry they were.

This reminds us that, indeed, we can be blind to a solution that doesn’t look like what we expected. Moreover, we can fail to see God’s grace behind the blessings we receive.

“Amen, amen, I say to you, you are looking for me not because you saw signs but because you ate the loaves and were filled” (John 6:26).

The key word here is “signs.” A sign is something that seeks to communicate some deeper reality to us. Many of us perhaps remember the definition of a sacrament: “an outward sign.”

Jesus worked a sign, but the people grasped it only on the material level; they looked for him because the loaves gave them physical nourishment. Jesus, however, wanted them to recognize the deeper reality of spiritual nourishment and make them experience a fullness of life, one that is expressed by Paul in the following words: “It is no longer I but Christ who lives in me” (Galatians 2:20). Thus, because of their misunderstanding, finally, Jesus point-blank tells them: “I am the bread of life.”

We have a huge advantage over both the crowd in the desert (first reading) and the one in Capernaum (Gospel). We know the ending. The Israelites make it to the Promised Land. The Bread of Life is the food of our redemption.

More or deeper than that, this Bread of Life is a Living Bread, Jesus Christ, the Risen Lord. However, each one should ask the hard question: Do I personally experience or encounter the Risen Lord in the Eucharist, or is that mere knowledge (theology) for me and not spirituality?

**“This is the work of God,
that you believe in the one he sent” (John 6:29).**

Here, the key word is *work*. Faith is work. So many people expect faith to be easy – just say I believe. They expect once they say: “I believe,” peace, love and joy will come flowing into their hearts. It works that way, sometimes. Other times, following Christ means carrying a cross. “Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me.” (Mt 16:24).

Too often we follow Jesus but only on our terms. Like the people who got the free meal. It is because it’s work to follow Jesus — it’s work to resist temptation; it’s work to forgive people who have hurt us; it’s work accepting some of the crosses that come our way. But when we give our lives over to Jesus completely, believing in him and following him comes easier, for we will not be left to carry our cross alone. He will be with us always. Only he can fulfill our deepest hunger.

To give ourselves completely to Christ is what Paul means when he tells the Ephesians to “put away the old self . . . and . . . put on the new self,” making a total conversion (Ephesians 4:22–24). This is what the acceptance of Christ entails.

Universal Prayer

Celebrant:

We turn to the God of righteousness and truth with our heartfelt prayer.

Lector:

- 1) For the Holy Father and all who serve the Church, let us pray to the Lord.
- 2) For nations crushed by debt, that the community of nations help restore them to financial help, let us pray to the Lord.
- 3) For all who have been assailed by storms this summer—hurricanes or tornadoes, floods or droughts, let us pray to the Lord.
- 4) For the sick, especially those in constant agony, that they receive effective pain relief and know God’s closeness, let us pray to the Lord
- 5) For all of us, that as we follow Saint Paul’s charge to put on our new selves, we may resolve with the grace of God to live our lives in righteousness and truth, let us pray to the Lord.

Celebrant:

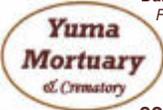
Gracious God, you sent the Bread of Life to nourish us always. Hear these and all the prayers we make through your Son, the true bread from heaven, our Lord for ever and ever.

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