

HOMILY ~ JULY 31/AUGUST 1, 2021
18th SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

We live as hungry people in a hungry world. Everyone is looking for something that will sustain and nourish life, something that will feed and energize, something that will fill and satisfy. Everyone is looking for bread. The problem is not that we are hungry, but the kind of bread we eat.

Think about the varieties of bread eaten in our lives and in the world today. King David is surely not the only one to have ever eaten the bread of betrayal, adultery or murder. In Syria, both sides are eating the bread of violence and war. Republicans and Democrats share the bread of negativity, hostility and name-calling. Many of us eat the bread of having to be right and get our way. We eat the bread of hurt feelings and resentment. Sometimes we eat the bread of loneliness, fear and isolation. There are times we eat the bread of sorrow or guilt. Other times we eat the bread of power and control. Sometimes we eat the bread of revenge or one-upmanship. We eat all kinds of bread. The bread we eat reveals something about the nature of our appetites.

The world is full of bread and yet far too many live hungry, empty and searching. That says something about our appetites and the bread we have eaten. It is a sure sign that the bread we have eaten cannot give real life. It is perishable bread that nourishes only a perishable life. It leaves us wanting only more of the same.

Not all bread sustains and grows life. Not all bread is nutritious. If you want to know the nutritional value of the bread, you have to look beyond the bread. Where did it come from? What are its ingredients?

That is what Jesus is teaching in today's Gospel. The people have shown up hungry. Just yesterday, Jesus fed 5,000 of them with five loaves and two fish. Today they show up and their first question is, "Rabbi, when did you come here?"

They do not marvel at yesterday's miracle, give thanks for God's generosity or even wonder who this rabbi is. It sounds to me like they are worried they might have missed the next meal, that Jesus started without them and they are too late. They saw no sign, no miracle, in yesterday's feeding. They saw nothing more than fish and bread. They

either refused or were unable to see beyond the fish and bread. They are interested only in their own appetites, and Jesus knows it.

“Very truly, I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves,” he says to them. The people are concerned for their bellies. Jesus is concerned for their lives. The people want to feed themselves with bread. Jesus wants to feed them with God. “Do not work for the food that perishes,” he tells them, “but for the food that endures for eternal life.”

The food that endures is Jesus himself. He is the bread that is broken and distributed for the life of the world. He is the bread that is broken and yet never divided. He is the bread that is eaten and yet never exhausted. He is the bread that consecrates those who believe in and eat him.

When we believe in Jesus, eating, ingesting, and taking him into our lives, we live differently. We see ourselves and one another as persons created in the image and likeness of God rather than as obstacles or issues to be overcome. We trust the silence of prayer rather than the words of argument. We choose love and forgiveness rather than anger and retribution. We relate with intimacy and vulnerability rather than superficiality and defensiveness. We listen for God’s voice rather than our own. Ultimately, we seek life rather than death.

“I am the bread of life,” Jesus tells the people. “Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.” He is offering the people himself. He is the imperishable bread that nourishes and sustains imperishable life.

Jesus makes us the same offer. He offers himself to us in every one of our relationships: family, friends, strangers, enemies, those who agree with us and those who disagree. In every situation and each day of our life, we choose the bread we will eat, perishable or imperishable. In so doing, we also choose the life we want.

So I wonder, what bread will we eat today?

In Christ,
Deacon Don