

Homily. 18th Sunday in Ordinary Time. Year. B. 3/4 August 2024.

They came looking for Jesus because that had all the bread that they could possibly eat, and why not? Everybody wants freebies, especially freebies that provide for our needs given at no cost to us and without effort by us. This is what drew the crowds to sail across the Sea of Galilee and find Jesus in Capernaum. In no way was this the response that Jesus was looking for by giving them the miracle of loaves and fish. He was offering the people more; a sign, something external that points and draws us to a deeper, important, meaningful message.

Could they get past the free food to what he was really offering and saying? This moves us to the matter of work, what God requires of us so that we can journey from the sign to its meaning and purpose. Jesus clearly told them, as he's telling us, what work is needed; the work of believing in Him as the One God has sent, the work of faith. Regardless what you might have been told or thought the entire world runs on faith. Faith lies beneath every deal we do, within every relationship we have. Without faith and trust, nothing anyone does or says can be believed, no relationship can be confidently maintained. It's the rise of deception, the breakdown of faith that causes all of the heartache in our lives and world.

A leap is required here, a leap for trusting faith, to accept and believe in the nourishment that God is offering us in Christ. Like the crowd we want more signs, more miracles, more proof and assurance that what is said is reliable and true. We get these signs all the time if we're alert to them, but in the end the leap is taken or it's not. That's our choice, our free will.

The crowd in Capernaum didn't seem inclined to leap, referencing Moses and the Manna in the desert, an old sign and story, asleep still to the new offer and tale Jesus was telling and spelling out for them. Always give us this true heavenly bread of God which brings life to the world, they said, blind to the living bread himself standing right in front of them. Are we too often like them, like this crowd? Can we see the signs of God in the word proclaimed, the sacraments celebrated and shared, the faith alive and witnessed in our parish community? Have we grasped and been changed by the Spirit of the Living God now living in us, empowering each of us here for our own mission and service in the Church and world today?

This story will continue to be told, the great sign and meaning of the bread will be explored with us here for a further three weeks. But, for now, the invitation has been given to us by Jesus; to do the work of God by leaping to faith in him as the one God has sent, our living bread. Are we up for this transforming work that will make us into life-giving bread for others? Or, are we still asleep to all of the signs God offers?