

CONNECT! SUNDAY REFLECTION

18th Sunday in Ordinary Time | For Sunday, August 1, 2021

A Longing For Fulfillment

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Exodus 16:2-4, 12-15

Ephesians 4:17, 20-24

John 6:24-35



Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me will never hunger, and whoever believes in me will never thirst." (John 6:35)

How many times do you use or hear the word "want" during the day? What do you want to be when you grow up? What do you want for dinner? I want to watch something else. Where do you want to be in 25 years?

We live in a culture that is governed by *wants*. Sadly, this endless desire for more is only intensified by countless advertising campaigns and the belief that the only things worth having are those that are new and novel.

As we continue our reading of the sixth chapter of John's gospel this Sunday, we get a sense that this was also the perspective of the crowds who had gathered around Jesus after he fed a great number with only a few loaves and fish. *"Jesus 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.'" Even though Jesus had satisfied their physical hunger, they still wanted more.*

Like so many people in our world today, the crowd that day was really only looking for something perishable, for temporary satisfaction to an immediate want. Whether this was an opportunity to see Jesus perform another miracle — or because they were hoping for more to eat than just bread and fish — they were hoping for something else. They wanted *just one more thing*.

St. John tells us, however, that Jesus recognized their misguided desires and reminded them — and us — that if we are to be truly filled (and fulfilled), we have to recognize and honor those hungers, hopes, and needs that are deep within us. We must recognize, in a special way, that common and very human need to be known and loved. These are the hungers and needs that Jesus addresses in this Gospel passage when he says to the crowds, *“Do not work for food that perishes but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you.”*

No amount of money, power, influence, sex, or material goods can ever bring true satisfaction and fulfillment. However much we might have in life, those fundamental desires that are deep within us will never be satisfied without the love of God and the care and support of a community. Pope Francis spoke to this [when he reflected](#):

“[The crowd] had given more meaning to that bread than to its donor. God himself is both the gift and the giver. Thus from that bread, from that gesture, the people can find the One who gives it, who is God. He invites them to open up to a perspective which is not only that of the daily need to eat, dress, achieve success, build a career. Jesus speaks of another food. He speaks of a food which is incorruptible and which is good to seek and gather... That is to say, to seek salvation, the encounter with God.”

In the end, we know that only God can truly provide the nourishment and fulfillment that will bring us lasting peace and joy and that will satisfy these deeply rooted needs and desires. But we also recognize that we have been given the great gifts of the Scriptures and the Eucharist — the Bread of Life — to nourish and strengthen us as we journey through life.

PRAYER

Draw near to your servants, O Lord,
and answer their prayers with unceasing
kindness,
that, for those who glory in you as their
Creator and guide,
you may restore what you have created
and keep safe what you have restored.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity
of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

—from [The Roman Missal](#)

As Pope Benedict XVI reminded the [bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean in 2007](#), *“Every Eucharist is a personal encounter with Christ. Listening to God’s word, our hearts burn because it is he who is explaining and proclaiming it. When we break the bread at the Eucharist, it is he whom we receive personally.”* To receive the Eucharist is not to get *something* but to encounter *someone*. Because in the Eucharist, we enter into a communion with Jesus himself. It is in this communion that the deepest desires and longings of our hearts find lasting fulfillment.

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