

August 12, 2108 19th Sunday of Ordinary Time

Today is the third Sunday of five that we read from the sixth chapter of John, what scripture scholars call The Bread of Life Discourse. As we break open the meaning of verses 41 to 51 of John Chapter 6, I would like to invite us to focus on one word, and that one word is *communion*. We often call the Eucharist, communion, so what are we saying when we use that word? These verses that we just heard today from John's Gospel help us to come to a deeper understand of what communion really means.

The word communion comes from two Latin words which when put together, mean *one with*. In these verses Jesus is slowly revealing how deeply he wants to be in communion with us, so much so that it can be hard to accept or to understand. The people in the gospel today mumble or they resist in their hearts what Jesus want to reveal his about deep and abiding communion with them.

The ancient people of Jesus's time to thought of God as far beyond them, the God in heaven and we on earth below. Modern people tend to think of Jesus as a brother, friend or a wise teacher. Like my friend Bryan Dolejsi said after his 30 - day retreat, "I thought that I knew the Lord, but really, we were just roommates." Neither way gets to what Jesus is saying in the gospel and neither one demands the same depth of conversion that he words do today. Jesus teaches a new level of communion with God, a God who we can eat as the bread of life. They can't put together the Jesus they know of humble beginnings with the Jesus who says, "I am the bread that has come down from heaven." Those simple words, "I am the bread that has come down from heaven" are profound words of God's desire to be in communion with us. Yes, this Jesus, young, poor, a carpenter's son, from a no-where town called Nazareth. And yes, he has come down from heaven. Jesus, in his person, not just in his words, says that God is in communion with every day people through the most ordinary events of our lives with the power of heaven, and this is possible through Jesus. The Gospel of John is a gradual of Jesus as the power of heaven that is one with them. The power of heaven present in Jesus when the wine ran out at the wedding feast at Cana and Jesus changed the water into wine The power of heaven present in Jesus in the human experience of illness when he healed the royal official's son and then the paralytic at Bethesda. The power heaven present in Jesus in the human experience of hunger when

Jesus feed the crowd of 5000 with five loaves of bread and two fish. Remember, the feeding of the 5000 is how chapter six of John begins. The people in today's gospel simply could not put together the Jesus they knew as a person with the claim that anyone who listens to the Father will come to him. That didn't stop Jesus at all. He made and even more radical teaching, "I give my flesh for the life of the world."

There are only two responses to what Jesus says. Either he is a crazy or he is God. We are here because we believe that Jesus is God. But do we *really* believe says? Do we accept that radical change that Jesus want to make happen in our lives? If we really believe that Jesus is the bread of life and that he gives us his flesh for the life of the world, then it means that we who eat his flesh, then there is nothing more important than to be in complete communion with Jesus. As John the Baptist said, "I must decrease so that He might increase." This is much more than a "feel good" religion, our faith is one of deep and radical transformation. This change, this conversion of life, that Jesus announces is challenging. Look at what St. Paul says to the Ephesians when he wrote "Do not grieve the Holy Spirit with which you were sealed for the day of redemption. All bitterness, fury, anger, shouting, and reviling must be removed from you, along with all malice." Sounds easy? Think again. When was the last time you yelled at another driver while driving, saying things that you would never say to them in person? When was the last time something didn't go quite your way and it ruined your whole day? Now think of our nation and our world. This weekend is the first anniversary of Charlottesville where white supremacy demonstrations are taking place. Hatred of all kinds, racial discrimination, divisions of all kinds are very real in our country and elsewhere in the world. We have a long ways to go.

Every one of us has some area in our life that needs to change. We need Jesus, we need to allow Jesus, the Bread of Life, to consume *us* with the communion of His love.