

AUGUST 5, 2018

Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Reading 1 [EX 16:2-4, 12-15](#)

Responsorial Psalm [PS 78:3-4, 23-24, 25, 54](#)

R. (24b) The Lord gave them bread from heaven.

Reading 2 [EPH 4:17, 20-24](#)

Gospel [JN 6:24-35](#)

When the crowd saw that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they themselves got into boats and came to Capernaum looking for Jesus. And when they found him across the sea they said to him, "Rabbi, when did you get here?" 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. Do 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." So they said to him, "What can we do to accomplish the works of God?" Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in the one he sent." So they said to him, "What sign can you do, that we may see and believe in you? What can you do? Our ancestors ate manna in the desert, as it is written: *He gave them bread from heaven to eat.*" So 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. For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." So they said to him, "Sir, give us this bread always." 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."

HOMILY:

To conclude our time away on vacation in Michigan, after some time visiting my father near Lansing and a few days of relaxation at Dad's vacation cottage, a friend and I decided to take the auto-ferry across Lake Michigan, that perpetual obstacle to a straight line between Waterloo and Lansing. Arriving obediently 45 minutes early at the Muskegon MI ferry terminal, we were faced with a long mass of cars, all packed into the small boarding area, in which we took our place. In the middle of this mini "traffic jam," we began to wonder, with everyone else, "how soon will we board the ferry, and then, will we have a good position for a quick get-away at the Milwaukee disembarking?"

Into this free-flowing gathering of anxiety arrived a revelation! A small boy, together with his grandmother, came not to board the ferry but just to see it arrive. While the rest of us attempted to veil in silent anticipation our nervousness about the upcoming rush into the ferry, this little guy was the life of the party! I'd say he was probably about five years old and brought with him unbridled enthusiasm. While he was clearly a "special needs" child, his joy for life was what was most special and endearing about him. Because of his unlimited and vocal excitement about the arriving ship, the entire crowd couldn't help smiling, as we learned some things about this extraordinary boy. His name was "Jake" and he was a **big fan** of the big ships. *How big a fan?* His grandmother reported to some stand-byers that Jake came to greet the ships *everyday* in the summer, **twice** a day! Remember, this was not to actually take the ferry, just to watch it come in—TWICE each day! He had become such a regular that he knew the names of all the captains of the ships and when we were told that Captain John was at the helm this time, he exclaimed, "OH, CAPTAIN JOHN IS MY FAVORITE!", though one got the sense that he probably said that about each captain! When the ferry finally appeared on the horizon, he began to leap up and down with uncontrolled glee and pointed it out, in case any of us missed it—and he did this twice a day, all summer! One might at first wonder about his grandmother, his beleaguered grandmother, who was also there twice a day,

except she clearly was enjoying so much his enjoyment that you got the sense that that she'd gladly come four times a day if that were possible! Jake—what an unforgettable figure!

Well, the ferry finally docked, the eastbound cars and passengers disembarked, and Jake had a touching visit with his friend Captain John, while we hurried and somewhat harried travelers went about our way. There was a mad rush onto the ferry, then out of our cars and a dash to get proper and best seats, after which wait staff quickly descended upon us, ready to sate our hungers with food and drink. A movie was available for our viewing pleasure, together with a video map tracking our progress. Two hours later, when we arrived at the Wisconsin harbor, the announcement to return to our cars was met with scurrying and a hurried return to our vehicles and, once we are safely ashore, we all heaved a sigh of relief that we are back on our way. And yet, I'm still thinking about that radiant, challenging image of Jake, who even today is probably standing on that Michigan shore, jumping for joy at the delight of a big ship coming into shore and his best friend, Captain . . . *you fill in the name* greeting him, of all captains HIS FAVORITE! This little boy has stayed with me, challenged me, and I hope will challenge you. This summer's travel season has found many of us on the move . . . from here to there, in search of relaxation, amusement, diversion, good times, oftentimes trying to get from "here to there" as fast as we can—but are we missing the sheer joy of simple pleasures all around us, trying to get to our destinations?

It's the dark side of how we were created—with free will, the ability to choose what we want, and then with powerful desires that attract us to certain things as seemingly fit to fulfill these desires: food, drink, friends, love, sex, material goods, the many beautiful things of this world. And yet, we can be like those travelers on the ferry, always waiting and hoping for something else further on life's journey, unable to see the marvel of the God-given gift of life before us (Jake saw it!). This truth of who we are is at the very heart of what Jesus has to say to us today—and how he challenges us to greater, fuller life. In the gospel, he speaks to the hungry crowd who he has just fed with a remarkable multiplication of the loaves, when he says to them, "Do not work for food that perishes but for the food that endures for eternal life . . . I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me will never hunger, and whoever believes in me will never thirst."

Can we admit that Jake, to some limited and disabled, has got it more-right than we do? The beauty of life, nature, a child, a spouse, a friend, call us to the present, which is real, and all around us, if we can stop and see it with eyes of wonder and gratitude. And because of how we have been created, we "hungry beasts" as beloved sons and daughters of a most gracious God, can we stop right here? For each of us, at each and every conscious moment, are on a hungry, perpetual search. Into this search, Jesus speaks to each human heart when he says, "Do not work for food that perishes but for the food that endures for eternal life which the Son of Man will give you . . . I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me will never hunger, and whoever believes in me will never thirst." Surprise, the end of our travels to satisfaction end right here, where the eternal longing of each human heart, Jesus, can be found.

The search is part of every conscious moment of our lives! Rather than looking off into the future, maybe it's this glorious, present moment, this sacred moment, where we can find lasting satisfaction, where we have been promised that the One who gave us this hunger is ready to feed us and satisfy us! He is food—the Food—that is *the way, the truth, and the life*. Simple bread and wine become the Bread of Life and the Wine of Salvation for which we are truly searching. With child-like, "Jake"-like eyes of wonder and gratitude, let the search end here. Nothing else satisfies like this incomparable truth—God with us!