

# EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

LECTIONARY #113

READING I Exodus 16:2-4, 12-15

A reading from the Book of Exodus

The whole Israelite community **grumbled** against Moses and Aaron.

The Israelites said to them,

"Would that we had **died** at the LORD's hand in the land

of Egypt,

as we sat by our fleshpots and ate our **fill** of bread!

But you had to **lead** us into this desert

to make the whole community **die** of famine!"

Then the LORD said to Moses,

"I will now rain down **bread** from heaven for you.

Each **day** the people are to go out and gather their **daily** portion,

thus will I **test** them,

to see whether they **follow** my instructions or not.

"I have **heard** the grumbling of the Israelites.

Tell them: In the evening twilight you **shall** eat flesh,

and in the morning you shall have your **fill** of bread,

so that you may know that I, the LORD, **am** your God."

In the evening **quail** came up and **covered** the camp.

In the morning a **dew** lay all about the camp,

and when the dew **evaporated**, there on the surface

of the desert

were fine **flakes** like hoarfrost on the ground. »

Exodus = EK-suh-duh

Stress "whole." This was not an isolated individual, but the community at large complaining.

fleshpots = pots of meat

Use an accusatory tone. They have a short memory of what life was like as slaves.

God answers their prayers despite their lack of gratitude.

Pause after "God" before concluding the story.

God's word is dependable.

hoarfrost = HOHR-frawst

## READING I

Exodus recounts a scene immediately after God's chosen people cross the Red Sea and finally experience deliverance from Egypt. As they begin their journey to Mount Sinai, where they encounter God directly and receive the law, the Israelites complain about lack of food. Their complaint is well founded. The wilderness is barren. Resources are limited. No obvious source of food appears in their new landscape. Their hunger quickly reveals how accustomed they have become to the abundant food of Egypt. Later, when they make their

way from Sinai to the Promised Land, complaining like this will prove detrimental to their relationship with God. At this point, however, these complaints only indicate a potential for growing in relationship with God. The people must learn that God not only provides them with military support to escape Egyptian forces, but God also provides sustenance. As their needs manifest, God hears the people's grumbling and informs Moses how they will be sustained; quail will be provided for meat at dinner and manna will be given for bread at breakfast. While the wanderings in the wilderness (see the book of Numbers). At this point, as the chosen

On seeing it, the Israelites asked one another, "What is this?"  
 for they did not know what it was.  
 But Moses told them,  
 "This is the bread that the LORD has given you to eat."

RESPONSORIAL PSALM Psalm 78:3-4, 23-24, 25, 54 (24b)

R. The Lord gave them bread from heaven.

What we have heard and know,  
 and what our fathers have declared to us,  
 we will declare to the generation to come  
 the glorious deeds of the LORD and  
 his strength  
 and the wonders that he wrought.  
 Man ate the bread of angels,  
 food he sent them in abundance.  
 And he brought them to his holy land,  
 to the mountains his right hand had won.

For meditation and context:

Give emphasis to the last line Moses speaks  
 so that it is recognized when referred to in  
 today's Gospel reading.

Ephesians = ee-FEE-zhuhnz

It is almost as if Paul is making an opening  
 argument in a trial. Take on his certitude  
 in your tone.

Be familiar enough with the text to deliver  
 this line looking out at the assembly.

Subdue the negative traits of the old life.  
 They no longer apply.

Beam with pride, joy, and confidence as  
 you deliver these last lines. We are a new  
 creation!

**READING II**

Continuing in our reading of Ephesians, we find Paul using strong legal rhetoric to persuade the Church in Ephesus to forgo living as Gentiles. By this he means two things. First, their engagement in the life of the mind must be transformed. He reminds them

people journey with God, the Lord gives them provisions in the wilderness, inviting them to grow in trust and faith. At the same time, this food strengthens them for the journey to the mountain and their direct encounter with God.

**GOSPEL**

that it is Christ who makes truth accessible, not the thought of some learned community or esoteric philosophy. To the extent that they cling to the latter, their minds are not yet converted to Christ. Second, their way of life must match their transformed minds. Encountering the fullness of truth in Christ should lead spontaneously to upright actions and habits of living. Baptized into Christ, we, like the Ephesians, are to recognize ourselves as new creations: new "Adams" and new "Eves." Made new persons in and through Christ, we can follow God's ways. We can abide in truth both in

our thoughts and in our deeds. With transformed minds and wills, we can take up habits of thought and action that give evidence to our righteousness and holiness and thus become signs of God's ongoing work in the world.

**Brothers and sisters:**  
 I declare and testify in the Lord  
 that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do,  
 in the futility of their minds;  
 that is not how you learned Christ,  
 assuming that you have heard of him and were taught in him,  
 as truth is in Jesus,  
 that you should put away the old self of your former way  
 of life,  
 corrupted through deceitful desires,  
 and be renewed in the spirit of your minds,  
 and put on the new self,  
 created in God's way in righteousness and holiness of truth.

READING II Ephesians 4:17, 20-24  
 A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Ephesians

GOSPEL John 6:24-35

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John

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." »

withdraw to a deserted place so they can  
have this rest. But crowds follow and Jesus  
pities them because "they were like sheep  
without a shepherd" (Mark 6:34).  
Then, last Sunday, as we began John 6,  
we heard the story of Jesus miraculously  
feeding a multitude with five loaves and a  
couple of fish—a similar scene would have  
transpired had we continued reading Mark's  
Gospel. In John 6, however, the crowd inter-  
prets the feeding as an indicator that they  
should make Jesus their king. But Jesus  
exhausted and in need of food and rest to  
recuperate. Jesus attempts to have them

hear this discourse through the Twenty-  
First Sunday in Ordinary Time and, in doing  
so, we have the opportunity to explore in  
greater depth the mystery hidden in the  
today's Gospel passage. To situate  
the Gospel passages from the previous two  
Sundays.  
On the sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary  
Time, we heard in the Gospel according to  
Mark the return of Jesus' disciples from  
missionary work. They are excited yet  
recuperate. Jesus attempts to have them

Emphasize "my," Jesus' answer corrects the  
people. All credit belongs to God, not Moses.

The crowd asks three questions. Each time,  
use an upward inflection. The first question  
asks what they can do; the second and third  
ask what Jesus can do for them. Read the  
pronouns carefully so the meaning of the  
exchange is captured.

Physical satiation is fleeting; spiritual food  
is everlasting.

The question is inconsequential but calling  
Jesus "Rabbi" is not. They are tracking Jesus  
down so that they can dialogue more with  
him. They yearn for him, but do they do so  
for the right reasons?

Capernaum = kuh-PER-nee-<sup>\*</sup>m  
or kuh-PER-nay-<sup>\*</sup>m or kuh-PER-n<sup>\*</sup>m

Use a comma after "bread" and then finish the thought; use an adamant tone on "always;"  
 "Whoever" shows that God has no partiality. He is available to everybody.

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**."

monarchy, the king was to secure sufficient sustenance for the population. So, when the crowd sought to make Jesus king, we can assume they were attuned to their biblical heritage.

At the same time, Jesus challenges them to see beyond the connection between providing food and the monarchy. He tells them to work for food (i.e., bread) "that endures for eternal life," which the Son of Man provides. The crowd faintly grasps his meaning and asks about the work they must do, which entails believing in the one sent by God. The crowd starts to

catch Jesus' meaning better. He is talking about himself and pointing to something more primordial than the monarchy. In an attempt to understand Jesus in light of a story from earlier in salvation history, the crowd turns to Moses and the manna provided in the desert (as we read in today's first reading). The story seems to match that of Jesus. He too provided food in a deserted place. So, the crowd cautiously considers whether Jesus might be a new Moses, but they want him to perform a sign, also like Moses did when the people were enslaved in Egypt. Importantly, the crowd follows Jesus' logic, but the continues to look deeper. He points out that Moses was not the one who actually provided the food or worked the wonders in Egypt. He was only an instrument of God, the heavenly Father of Jesus. Seemingly brought to clear understanding, the crowd begs Jesus for the everlasting bread of the Father. With that, today's Gospel passage closes on a cliffhanger: Jesus identifies himself with this bread. Will the people understand? If so, will they accept? And what would it mean to do so? E.W.