

Homily for XVIII (18) Sunday year B. 01-08-2021 by Fr. Lubem Robert Waya, osj.

First Reading: Exodus 16:2-4, 12-15

Psalm: Psalm: 77(78): 3-4, 23-25, 54

Second Reading: Ephesians 4:17, 20-24

Gospel: John 6:24-35

WHAT DO YOU SEEK IN LIFE?

Today's first reading from the book of Exodus recalls a key moment in the life of God's chosen people, the meeting point between Israel's impatience and God's patience in the wilderness of Sinai when because of hunger they grumbled and complained against Moses and Aaron. Like us, when the going is good, they remain a people of faith. However, when the going gets tough, they are quick to forget the good the Lord their God had worked for them, delivering them from the hands of Pharaoh. The sons of Israel even wished that it would have been better for them to remain in Egypt, suffering but eating to their fill rather than escape but starve in the wilderness. They did not remember that if the Lord was strong and capable of delivering them from slavery, how much more would He be able to provide food for them when they call on Him. And to show indeed that the Lord is a great provider, He heard them and rained down for them quails and manna from heaven, and they all ate to their satisfaction. This heavenly bread the Lord fed them was however only a symbol and just a pointer to the true Bread of Life which would later come down from heaven to earth to give life to the world in the person of Jesus Christ. Christ confirms this today in the gospel reading when the people come seeking Him for food, because He had fed the five thousand. He gives them a new orientation to seek after what they need rather than what they want. They desired the physical bread which satisfies only the physical hunger but He redirected their focus to the true bread they truly need which satisfies the deepest human yearnings and gives eternal life which is Christ present in the Eucharist. Ask yourself, what about you? What do you seek? The physical food or spiritual food?

Christ continues His catechesis today on that spiritual food, the Eucharist, reassuring us that truly it is the Father and Himself who give us this true bread from heaven that gives life to the world. We must therefore labour only for this food that endures to eternal life. But how can we work for God so that we can have this food? Jesus answers as He says 'This is working for God: you must believe in the one He has sent.' Ask yourself, do you believe in Christ? What does it mean to believe in Him?

To believe in Christ requires faith in Jesus who invites us to follow in His footsteps and to strive after things of higher value. He is the one whom God has sent and on whom He has set His seal as God's only Son and the true Bread from heaven come down to give us life. However, the truth is that we cannot receive eternal life from this bread unless we believe in Christ's presence in this bread. That is why Christ reiterates to us saying, 'I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never be hungry; he who believes in me will never thirst.' So ask yourself today then, do you believe in Christ's presence in the Eucharist? He is present in the Eucharist whole and entire as He tells us. That is why for us Catholics, the Eucharist is not a symbol of the body and blood of Christ but the real body and blood of Christ together with His soul and divinity under the appearance of bread and wine. It is for this reason that once consecrated, we preserve the Eucharistic species in our tabernacles for the sick and for adoration because we know by faith that Christ is truly present in them.

Approaching Christ in the Eucharist therefore demands adequate preparation on our part that we put aside the old self (sin) and put on the new self (life of Christ) as St. Paul urges us in our second reading from his letter to the Ephesians. This means we become conformed to our new identity as Eucharistic persons. And as Eucharistic persons we reflect by our attitude, character and behaviour our new way of life of love, goodness, holiness and righteousness as we were created by God. The sad reality however is that often times we want and prefer to seek the material things of this passing world rather than the spiritual things of our real home (heaven) which we truly need. That is why it is not uncommon to find people who leave the Catholic Church to pop-music centres or miracle centres in search of God where they can do everything and anything but worship God. We often want to dance, sing, clap, hear and applaud to talks that inspire us without calling us to reflection and challenging our

moral compass. We prefer shows, loud and trendy but empty and without the content that our souls truly need. What about you? What do you seek? Do you seek what you want or what you need? We should only seek Christ because only Christ truly satisfies the deepest human yearnings, and we have Him with us in the Church in the Eucharist. Why not approach Him to receive Him, to worship or pray to Him? May the Lord deepen our understanding of the Eucharist and instill in us the true longing for what we need which is Christ the true Bread of Life, rather than what we often want which is temporal and fleeting. We ask this through Christ Our Lord. Amen