

REAL PRESENCE

AUGUST
02

18TH SUNDAY IN
ORDINARY TIME

taken up residence. Knowing they want another miracle show, Jesus tells them they missed the point of what happened the day before. What

THE FOOD OF LIFE

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19TH SUNDAY IN
ORDINARY TIME

from heaven is nonsensical. They know him as the boy 'from over the hills. The 'complaining' of Jesus' critics recalls how their ancestors complained against Moses in the desert. Jesus reminds them that, although their ancestors ate manna, a mysterious bread from heaven, they

he had given them was not simply ordinary bread but it was a sign pointing towards the real food of eternal life. They want their physical hungers satisfied, would love an unfailing supply of food that requires no physical work. This is not what Jesus is offering. He is the bread of God, the true food, which will satisfy the deepest hungers of the human heart. Faith is the way to obtain that bread. Believing is a key word in John's Gospel, occurring more than one hundred times.

The great feeding sign occurred at Passover.

are dead. Because they had resisted Moses, God did not allow them to see the promised land. A similar fate awaits their descendants who now murmur against Jesus. He is the bread of life giving life to those who come to him.

The words, 'they shall all be taught by God,' are taken from Isaiah 54:13 where they are part of the great promise that, after years of exile and suffering, Israel would be wondrously restored. The walls and gates of ruined Jerusalem will be made from precious stones and 'all your children shall be taught by the Lord and great shall be the posterity of your children.' Jesus looks forward to the coming restoration of Israel. The words, 'no

The first Passover showed how God freed the Israelites by his mighty acts alone. They were too weak to withstand the might of Egypt. Even as they wandered through the desert, he sustained them with manna, the mysterious bread from heaven. Jesus, the bread of life, will satisfy the deepest hungers of those who come to him.

TODAY'S READINGS

EXOD 16:2-4, 12-15; EPH 4:17, 20-24;
JOHN 6: 24-35

one has seen the Father,' is another reference to Moses. Moses had asked to be allowed see God on Mount Sinai but the sight of God's face was so awesome that all he was allowed to see was God's back as he retreated (Exodus 33:20). Jesus has known the Father face to face and makes him known (cf. John 1:18).

TODAY'S READINGS

1 KG 19:4-8; EPH 4: 30-5:2;
JOHN 6: 41-51

**AUGUST
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20TH SUNDAY IN
ORDINARY TIME

THE LIVING BREAD

When Jesus said that the heavenly bread he would give was his flesh for the life of the world, it probably sent a shiver of horror through his hearers. For a Jewish

audience, who had a very detailed list of the types of meat that could be used as food, eating human flesh sounded like cannibalism. Jesus does little to remove the shock. If anything, he adds to their horror by inviting them to drink his blood as a condition for entering into life. Jewish kosher food law insisted that meat was not fit for human consumption until every trace of blood had been removed by careful and repeated washing.

What does it mean to eat the flesh and drink the blood of Jesus? Flesh and blood are the deepest essence of a human being. When John wrote at the beginning of his Gospel that 'the Word became flesh' he meant precisely that God's son has entered into the darkness and pain, the messiness of human existence. Jesus' humanity was not a sort of theatrical costume, a disguise for his divinity. "Becoming flesh" means accepting brokenness and limitation, as well as the capacity for imagination, love and friendship. "Becoming flesh" for Jesus reaches its truest point in his passion and death. When he is most degraded and broken as a human being,

hanging on a cross like a common criminal, Jesus reveals the depth of God's compassion. To eat the flesh and drink the blood of Jesus means to share at the deepest possible level his sacrificial death as a life offered in love that provides nourishment and life. Just as Jesus draws life from the Father, the believer who

receives Jesus in faith as the Bread of Life will draw sustenance from him

TODAY'S READINGS

PROV 9:1-6; EPH 5:15-20;
JOHN 6:51-58



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**AUGUST
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21ST SUNDAY IN
ORDINARY TIME

FAITH IS A GIFT

Today, we conclude our meditation on the Eucharistic mystery through the lens of John 6. Opposition to Jesus and his teaching has been growing throughout the dispute about the bread

of life. It now reaches its climax. Even some of his followers find what he is saying 'intolerable language' that cannot be taken seriously. A crowd of five thousand, 'not counting women and children,' had shared

the meal of bread and fish. That crowd has dwindled, as the meaning of the bread sign has been unveiled to them.

Jesus makes no effort to smooth out the problem by offering a simpler explanation or protesting that they have misunderstood him. There is something even more terrible on the way. For faint-hearted disciples, the cross will be a still greater scandal. The saying about the flesh having nothing to offer (verse 63) does not refer to the Eucharistic flesh of Jesus. It refers to limited human perceptions of Jesus that will never be able to understand him without the help of the Spirit. John insists

that Jesus knows the identity of those who will follow him and that one of them will betray him. Left alone with the twelve, he asks them, 'will you also go away?' It is a stark and uncompromising question. Simon, as spokesman for the group, makes a profession of faith: where else could they find the life they have found in Jesus? How would you answer today?

TODAY'S READINGS

JOSH 24:1-2, 15-18; EPH 5: 21-32;
JOHN 6: 60-68

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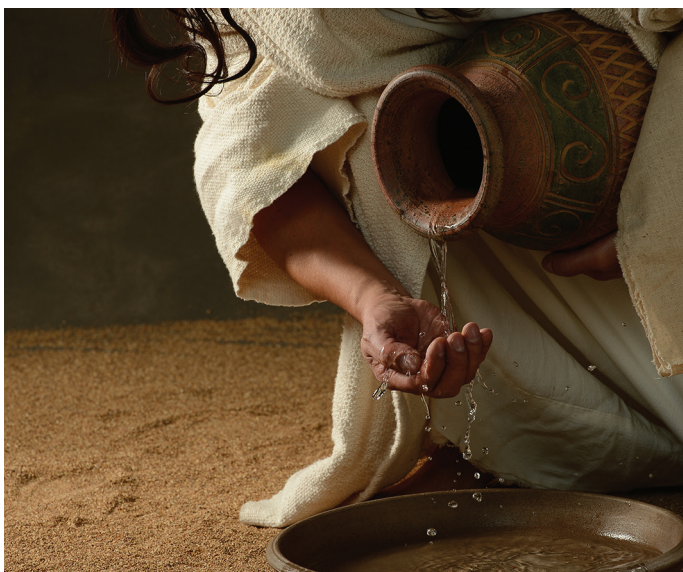
22ND SUNDAY IN
ORDINARY TIME

A CONTROVERSY STORY

Today's Gospel has two major themes. The first is a debate about ritual purity and the second is a teaching about what truly defiles a person. The debate about ritual purity is sparked by the Pharisees who noticed that Jesus and his disciples seemed to take a more casual approach to the purity laws than they did. They would have been shocked by the disciples' failure to wash their hands before eating. Mark lists other examples of purity regulations. While the Old Testament had some rules about ritual purity, the Pharisees made them more exacting. The majority of Jews, like the Galilean country folk who followed Jesus, had a more relaxed approach to the purity regulations.

This first section is a 'controversy story,' or an account of a religious dispute. The climax of a controversy story is a brief but telling statement by which Jesus clinches the argument to the discomfort of his critics who are left without a reply. The saying ('you put aside the commandments of God to cling to human traditions') is preceded by a quotation from Isaiah 29:13 about lip-service rather than genuine love that honours God.

The second section of the Gospel is addressed to a wider audience. Jesus teaches that real purity is not a matter of deciding which foods are clean or unclean. What really defiles a person is what comes from their inner depths. Jesus lists twelve vices (fornication, theft etc). The counterpoints to the vices are the virtues that will come from observance of the Ten Commandments. Moral failures, rather than a failure to observe ritual purity, are what truly defile people



TODAY'S READINGS

DEUT 4:1-2, 6-8; JAS 1: 17-18, 21-22, 27; MARK 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23