

Reflection John 6: 24-35

- Our world is constantly calling us to focus on our physical well-being. Jenny Craig, Lucille Roberts and the folks at Pelton and Weight Watchers constantly prod us to “get in shape”.
- Just walk down the cereal aisle at Stop and Shop and you will learn: Cheerios is “Heart Healthy”; Oatmeal lowers your Cholesterol; Special K strengthens bones and Raisin Bran keeps the plumbing working! (Why cant chocolate cake do these things?).
- Marketers play on our desire to have healthy bodies and live long lives. They hint at immortality but we know they can’t *really* deliver it. Still they work hard to focus our attention on physical needs.
- But wouldn’t it be something if you picked up a box of cereal and read these claims: “This food makes you view the world differently; makes you more patient and understanding; makes you love others and makes *you* more lovable; eat this food and you will live forever.”
- While we will never see these claims on a box of cereal, this is exactly the claim our Lord makes about the Eucharist!
- Today, on this Sunday, Jesus calls us to move beyond our desires for physical fulfillment and satisfaction. Our first reading today reminds us God takes care of our physical nourishment as He did by sending Manna to the Israelites on their journey through the desert. Today Jesus calls us to focus on our spiritual well-being and to focus on how God provides food to nourish this much more important side of who we are.
- In Chapter 6 of John’s Gospel, a chapter known by the title “Jesus the Bread of Life” we learn much about the Holy Eucharist. In this chapter Jesus shifts our focus from the physical to the spiritual. He has already multiplied the loaves and walked on water. Crowds start to follow Him, some to see these miracles, some to get a free meal!
- But Jesus tells them: don’t see me as a miracle worker who satisfies your physical needs. Jesus talks about a new dimension to life. A new side of the person little was known about: Our Spirit. Jesus speaks of how this spiritual side of our lives is far more important than the physical side. Not that our physical

self is unimportant, but the spirit leads to *eternal life*. Life forever, in more beautiful ways than we can imagine.

- Jesus talks about the need to care for and strengthen our spiritual life. He talks about what our spirit desperately needs: to have God's presence and to live out God's will.
- Jesus then arrives at a critical moment. He reveals to the crowds that HE is God's presence, the Messiah, the Son of God sent down from heaven to sacrifice Himself for the forgiveness of our sins.
- Jesus tells them and all of us He is the "living bread" and we must eat this bread to strengthen our spiritual self. We must eat this bread to be truly alive and to gain eternal life.
- So what does it mean to "eat" this living bread? It means several things.
- It means to let Jesus into our lives and to believe He is the Son of God. It means to follow His examples and live out His teachings to Love God and love others. It means to submit our lives and will to Him. It means to allow His spirit to strengthen us.
- It means to *truly believe* Jesus wants to dwell in us and to *know* that He established a way to do just that. Here's how.
- At the Last Supper Jesus gave us a wonderful gift. He knew He was about to suffer and be put to death. He wanted to be with us always; to be accessible to us; to be in a constant relationship with us; to be really present and feed our spirits. So He did this wonderful thing – He invited us to a meal – The Eucharist.
- He took bread and wine, things He knew would endure over time, things we need to feed our physical self – and He gave them new meaning. He changed them into His body and blood. He said eat and welcome me in. He told us: every time you share this meal you celebrate my teachings; my sacrifice and my sufferings – in a REAL way. And I am really present for you.
- Jesus tells us His presence in us is all the nourishment we need.
- He tells us no one who comes to Him is ever rejected. We can bring our cares, our fears, our hurts, and our sins to Him and He will transform us.
- We need Jesus to sustain us. We need this Bread of Life. And if we let Jesus feed us we really do become one with Him. We

begin to think and act with the mind and heart of Jesus. We become His hands here on earth.

- We know that when we eat physical food that nourishment is taken and distributed throughout our entire body so that every part is cared for.
- Jesus calls us to take this bread of life (our spiritual food) and distribute it, share it. He expects us to find those in need; the sick; the lonely; the poor, the worried – those hungry for His love – all the members of His one body.
- He expects us to find them and feed. Feed them with His peace, His mercy, His forgiveness and His love.
- It wouldn't take long for any of us to know were to begin. We know where the hunger is in our world. Sometimes as close as our own neighborhood – even our own families.
- So here is our “take away” for this Sunday:
 - Don't believe for one second you are not precious to God, you are!
 - Don't believe for one second that nothing happens at that altar. Jesus becomes really present and dwells in us.
 - Don't believe you can't make a difference in a person life. You can bring them the love of Jesus; you can bring them the Bread of Life.
- It's a very simple and beautiful arrangement: Jesus feeds us, we feed others.

God bless you all!!