

Reflection Questions

- What are the “perishable goods” that you desire that may get in the way of seeking a deeper relationship with Christ?
- What kinds of futile thoughts and beliefs challenge your trust in God?
 - How might you overcome these cognitions and replace them with thought patterns rooted in faith?
- Jesus says in this week’s Gospel reading, “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.”
 - When have you tended to turn to Christ for immediate fulfillment?
 - How does your approach to the Eucharist change knowing that it is “food that endures for eternal life”?

18th Sunday in Ordinary Time



We have been given an opportunity to be clothed in new life with Christ through twelve step and sacramental recovery. We’ve recognized the emptiness that comes from a life run on our own accord, even if our problems appear to be of another's making. Our spiritual malady has us operating out of fear, trying to control other people and outcomes, and having difficulty expressing our true needs. Our condition, we believe, has centered itself in our minds.

Before we sought help for these afflictions, we may have professed faith in Jesus but operated under faulty beliefs. We were never satisfied with the perishable goods we craved and became more self-exerting in order to achieve an impossible contentment. By the grace of God, we have been plucked from this endless cycle of extreme dependence and shown a new way.

This week's readings continue to point toward Jesus Christ as the Bread of Life, highlighted by the scripture from the 6th chapter of John's Gospel. In addition, we will hear Saint Paul speak to the new life made possible by Christ in this week's second reading (Eph. 4:17, 20-24):

*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.*

Our short-term desires (or the compulsion to help meet another's) have a tendency to get in the way of our long-term needs. Jesus knows this about human nature and is confronted with this reality after feeding a crowd of 5,000 people. Crowds of followers go to great lengths to find our Lord, but perhaps with questionable intentions.

Jesus proclaims:

*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.*

Therefore, we turn to Christ as our guide, our Higher Power, and our Savior. Through the process of working the steps (in particular, step 2), we shift our beliefs and futile thoughts toward Christ. We can find an intimate encounter with our Lord in the Eucharist, as further explored in John 6 and emphasized by Saint Ignatius of Antioch:

“Every time [the Eucharist] is celebrated, the work of our redemption is carried on and we break the one bread that provides the medicine of immortality, the antidote for death, and the food that makes us live forever in Jesus Christ.”

Most of us would give everything we have for our loved ones to get well (and many of us nearly have). Only God can heal the wounds of addiction and unhealthy attachment. We must not let short-term efforts to control what we can't get in the way of our eternal gaze toward Christ.