



August 4, 2024

Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Ex 16:2-4, 12-15 | Eph 4:17, 20-24 | Jn 6:24-25

Written by
THE
FAITHFUL
DISCIPLE

GROW AS A DISCIPLE | PRAY, STUDY, ENGAGE, SERVE

When have you grumbled against God instead of consenting, trusting, and believing he would see you through to a brighter future? In this first reading from Exodus, the whole Israelite community laments over their wanderings in the desert; their earthly focus on hunger and thirst leads them to believe slavery in Egypt would have been better than God's freedom for them. When we are struggling for whatever reason, it's easy to forget all that God has done for us in the past and all he desires to do for us in the future. We may not even recognize the very life-giving and life-sustaining "bread" that lays before us, much as the Israelites did not recognize the bread that lay before them in the desert. In spite of our hard-heartedness at times, however, God is truly patient; he loves us beyond measure. Just as he did not condemn the Israelites, he does not condemn us but rather, calls us back to him time and again with love and mercy.

GO EVANGELIZE

PRAYER, INVITATION, WITNESS, ACCOMPANIMENT

As we heard, God sends the people quail and manna – bread from heaven – to satisfy their frustrated longings while preparing them for an even greater "bread from heaven" that is still to come. In the Gospel, Jesus references this Scripture passage and clarifies that it was not Moses, but his Father who provided the bread from heaven. Jesus tells his disciples to "work for food that endures for eternal life" because he wants them to see the bigger picture. He wants them (and us!) to understand that we should not toil only for physical bread, but for the truest food that is life-giving to our souls – the food found in accomplishing the works of God by believing and following the one he sent: Jesus. We do this by following Paul's advice from the second reading and seek to "be renewed in the spirit of [our] minds," following God's way of holiness. Only in and through this conformity to Christ will we be prepared to go forth and witness to the mystery of our faith.

REFLECT This week, in thinking about how you can "accomplish the works of God," turn to Paul's Letter to the Ephesians. He tells them to put away their old self and "put on the new self, created in God's way." Examine where you might not be seeing your own manna from heaven, and refocus your efforts to give praise and thanksgiving to God for his never-ending mercy and care.