

18th Sunday

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8-02-09

Last week, we listened as Jesus fed a crowd of perhaps 15,000 with five barley loaves and two fish. At the Mass I attended on vacation, the priest said "it was like three medium Domino's pizzas was enough for all those people." (He never heard of LaRosa's.)

Today, the crowd is searching for Jesus, not because they believe in him, but because he filled their bellies. They sought the gifts, not the Giver. They didn't want Jesus, they wanted something FROM Jesus. If that's all our prayer ever is: "Jesus, please give me....Lord, I need" will we ever find God? Of course we pray when we are in need, when someone is sick or unemployed or in trouble. God isn't a solution to problems; God is a presence. So, we must also cry out, "Lord, I want YOU! God, I long for you!"

The Trappist monks at Gethsemane KY have a saying that: "you will never find God until you stop looking everywhere else." On the wall of their courtyard is carved the words "God alone."

God alone. Not a full tummy. Not the latest toys. No travels. No new clothes. Two food items at every meal, neither of them meat. No television. No worries about what people think of them.

Lots of quiet. Prayer. the bible. Reading. Work. The Body and Blood of Christ at daily Mass. The monks don't need much closet space: one good habit, a couple of work habits. "You will never find God until you quit looking everywhere else." The couple of monks I met are amazingly happy. They have found God. The monks are a sign to everyone who has to have a full refrigerator and an overflowing closet, a complicated, cluttered life: God Alone.

Jesus said, "Do not work for food that perishes but for food that endures for eternal life." Elsewhere Jesus said, "Do not worry about what you will eat...Seek first the kingdom of God, and all these will be given you besides...Not on bread alone does man live, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God." Try to seek the Giver, not just the gifts. [pause]

The Israelites were in the desert between Egypt and the Promised Land for forty years. Every evening God fed them with quail, and every morning the manna would lay on the ground. And God's people collected just enough for the day. Every morning they would have to trust in God again for the manna, and every evening they had to trust in God for the quail. If they tried to collect two days

worth--to have some in store in case God didn't come through--it would spoil. "Give us this day our daily bread."

Each Saturday/Sunday, God feeds us with a new manna, a new bread from heaven. It is the actual risen presence of Jesus Christ, who is God. If we really believed that, would we miss even one Sunday? If we really believed that, would we ever leave after Communion unless it's an emergency? If we believed that, would we not crawl into church on our hands and knees?

Bread from heaven! Happy are those who are called to His supper!