

Missionary Commentary

Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time
August 4, 2024

Sunday Readings

Exodus 16:2-4, 12-15
Psalm 78:3-4, 23-24, 25, 54
Ephesians 4:17, 20-24
John 6:24-35

[USCCB Link to the Readings](#)

Trust Where the Bread Leads

Today's readings have one element in common and it is so common because it is part of the lives of most people: bread. Whether you like white, whole wheat, sourdough, rye or pumpernickel, bread sustains many peoples and cultures. Obviously, that is not the pearl of wisdom that today's readings offer us. What lies deeper is God's love and mercy and our response to trust God at all moments of our lives. It is very easy to say, "I love and trust God," but it is not that easy to actually live in such a way that our lives prove that this trust is real.

The Israelites moaned and groaned when they suffered at the hands of the pharaohs in slavery. They witnessed the parting of the Red Sea, and as the Scripture says, "they walked with dry feet" through it. They believed that the wall of water would not close until they passed to the other side. What a spectacular moment that must have been! But as they grew hungry and tired, their trust wavered. We all have moments when this scene has been played out in our lives. Think about it now...What was your moment? How did you get over this to help you return to God?

Two virtues bring us all back to the loving embrace of our God: gratitude and humility. Gratitude because God, indeed, did give us this "bread" which sustains us, and humility to admit that we were lacking in trust. This is what St. Paul means about renouncing the "old self" and embracing the "new self." He doesn't mention this aspect of transformation, but it happens slowly, and requires many tries. Over and over again, we need to return to God in gratitude and humility.

Whether we are conscious missionary disciples or people who haven't quite reached that stage (yet!), we often fail to trust God in certain moments of life. Let us partake of the Bread of Heaven, the Eucharist, as we seek to grow in gratitude, humility and trust.

continued from previous page

Notes on the Sunday Readings

First Reading

Exodus 16:2-4, 12-15 — The Israelite community has lost patience with Moses and Aaron because they are suffering from hunger. They blame Moses for even helping to free them from slavery. In the reading, Moses does not even have time to invoke God's mercy, for God has already manifested how to satisfy their hunger. God anticipates our needs.

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 78:3-4, 23-24, 25, 54 — Praise and thanks is given to God for all the times God has responded to our needs. It is ours to proclaim God's love and providence throughout our lives and to all generations.

Second Reading

Ephesians 4:17, 20-24 — The key phrase in Paul's letter to the Ephesians is "you should put away the old self...and be renewed in the spirit of your minds and put on the new self." God has shown us how to do this by following Jesus, each one of us has to make the personal decision to work to become the new self in "holiness of truth."

Gospel

John 6:24-35 — The people are looking for Jesus. This simple act leads to an important teaching. Jesus reminds them how God took care of his people in the desert with manna, but Jesus is even greater than that. Following Jesus courageously and completely, and partaking of the true bread from heaven, will seal our lives here on earth and for all eternity. Believing in Jesus will always provide us with the strength we need as missionary disciples.

Notes and commentary by Sr. Nancy Schramm, OSF, a [Franciscan Sister of the Sacred Heart](#) currently ministering at a rural mission church in Pembroke Township, Illinois who previously served in the Amazon area of Brazil for 32 years and is past president of USCMA.

Please pray for the missions.
May God bless you in all the ways you Go Forth...

Support our work! Donate to the [Pentecost Appeal today!](#)



Go Forth ... is a service funded by the Catholic Communications Campaign and USCMA, a community of faith leaders engaged in networking, formation, and advocacy for God's mission. All who serve God's mission are welcome. Learn more at www.uscatholicmission.org or call 202-832-3112.

