

EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (8/1-2/2009)

Exodus 16/2-15, Psalm 78, Ephesians 4/17-24, John 6/24-35

Every third year (during the “B” cycle, the cycle of Mark’s Gospel), the Church treats the entire sixth chapter of John’s Gospel in a five week series.

This is the second installment.

Jesus has fed the 5000 and then calmed the raging sea - a good day’s work, you must admit.

Now he is back in Capernaum with a curious and somewhat stubborn congregation.

They want him to perform some kind of sign to show that he is from God.

Apparently the feeding of the large crowd hadn’t quite convinced them.

What they suggest is that he do what God did in the desert with their ancestors; when the Israelites ran short on food, supposedly Moses provided daily “manna” or bread for them.

That story is recounted in the reading from Exodus today.

Jesus corrects their misreading of Scripture and reminds them it was not Moses, but God, who fed them in the wilderness.

When his listeners ask Jesus to give them bread, he does more than that; he says, *“I myself am the bread of life. No one who comes to me shall ever be hungry; no one who believes in me shall ever thirst.”*

So there you have it: Jesus is the bread of life.

And presumably he is our bread of life as well.

But what does it all mean?

We’ll find out more in the three weeks to come, but maybe we can make a start on it today.

The key idea in this entire chapter of John will be faith in Jesus.

The key idea of John’s whole Gospel is to believe in Jesus if we are to have life, any kind of life.

Belief in Jesus.

Belief that he comes from God, speaks and acts for God, and is now seated at the Father’s right hand in heaven, interceding on our behalf and on behalf of his Church..

Belief in his words, his teachings, his commands, his life, his death, his resurrection.

We all *say* we do believe – at least most of us who will be reading this essay.

One of the professors here at the seminary continuously challenges his seminarian students with the phrase: What does it look like in real life?

He wants them not only to know the words and the doctrines, but to apply those words in real life situations.

Does my belief in Jesus the Christ translate into my life? How?

What difference does my belief make? What would I be like without that belief?

Paul says it in Ephesians today: *“You must put on that new man (woman) created in God’s image, whose justice and holiness are born of truth.”*

So putting on Jesus has something to do with both justice and holiness.

To be just, to be holy!

That’s a start.