

Reflection

Eighteenth Sunday Ordinary Time

August 4, 2024

Today's readings center on the search for the bread that feeds hunger—both spiritual and physical. The Israelites grumbled about their lack of food while traveling to the promised land. This is typical, particularly in settings of adversity and deprivation. The Israelites, like all of us, are traveling a great distance to try and unlearn habits that were formed under Pharaoh's whip and discover anew what it means to travel this earth under the watchful eye of a loving God. It's also possible that the Israelites' complaints were a sign of their lack of faith in their God.

The impact of globalization, conflict, terror, and climate change on the daily lives of people in countries like Gaza, Darfur, Congo, and Sudan forces us to acknowledge that far too many people in the world today lack access to necessities. But Jesus' action of feeding the hungry crowd that had gathered to hear him speaks of God's generous gift of food. Thus, God is portrayed as a God who pays attention to the grievances of humanity. The wilderness teaches us an essential lesson: neither Israel nor we go alone. The desert God is a life-sustaining, gift-giving, and prayer-hearing God.

Our lives, however, must transcend the tangible, so unlike the Israelites, we do not live our entire lives moaning—even to the extent of accusing God of desiring our death in the wilderness. Let's acknowledge that Jesus is the living bread that has descended from heaven for us to consume and remain alive. The bread he offers is his flesh for the world to survive. And the most precious treasure we possess is the Eucharist, Jesus among us. Hence there is no other method than Mass to be with Jesus and for him to be with us. Attending Mass with Jesus is more than just a treat for us. It motivates us to be kind to others.