

August 2, 2009 – Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Exodus 16:2-4,12-15; Psalm 78; Ephesians 4:17,20-24; John 6:24-35

What demands my attention in today's readings is one line in the passage from Exodus. In telling people about his plans for feeding them in the desert, God tells Moses; "Each day the people are to go out and gather their daily portion." Actually, it's not the whole line that leaps out at me, but the two words, "daily portion." Well, okay, the one word, "daily." Why only a daily portion? The issue could be greed, not wanting people to gather more than their fair share. The issue could be gluttony, not wanting people to overeat. The issue could be any number of things, but I suspect the real issue is trust. There's manna today, but what if there isn't any tomorrow? In the Our Father, we pray, "Give us this day our daily bread." How hard it is to trust the God who provides for us today to continue to do so tomorrow. We want to take matters in our own hands, build a little stockpile, have some insurance against a bad day. I don't know if trust is an issue for you, but it sure is for me!

What is one way in which you could practice trust in God?

August 9, 2009 -- Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

1 Kings 19:4-8; Psalm 34; Ephesians 4:30—5:2; John 6:41-51

At the end of one of my scripture classes several years ago, a non-Catholic guest of one of our group members said to us: "The Catholic Church has a lot to offer to the world. If you would just get over your hang-up about communion being the real body and blood of Christ, you could get a lot more members." I suggested she read chapter 6 of John's Gospel. But I wonder sometimes if our belief in the Real Presence is as deep as it should be. Yes, we take elaborate care of tiny fragments of consecrated hosts. Yes, we protect the recipes for altar breads with detailed rules and regulations. But does receiving the Body and Blood of our God in Communion every week – or even every day – change us? Or is this simply one more thing we believe, disconnected from our lives except in a theoretical way?

How does sharing Communion change you?

August 15, 2009 – Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Revelation 11:19a,12:1-6a, 10ab; Psalm 45; 1 Corinthians 15:20-27; Luke 1:39-56

When Mary was chosen to be the mother of the Messiah, she had one question: "How can this be, since I do not know man?" Once that question was answered, she accepted her mission and dealt with the details as they arose. Today I gave instructions to several people who were to place various symbols of our faith on the casket of a sister whose funeral we were celebrating. They had question after question after question – which direction should it face? which end of the casket? where should I stand when I place it? should I go back to my seat right away? and so on and so on. We get so afraid of making a mistake sometimes that we're paralyzed from doing anything. Maybe this is one reason why Mary was chosen: "Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled," and you didn't need to know the whole game plan before you could say "yes"!

How much detail do you need to know before you say yes?

August 16, 2009 – Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Proverbs 9:1-6; Psalm 34; Ephesians 5:15-20; John 6:51-58

It's hard to imagine how we might have reacted had we been in the crowd hearing today's words from Jesus. Certainly Jews would have been shocked and horrified at the prospect of eating human flesh and drinking human blood. It's not at all difficult to imagine that people walked away from following Jesus after this. In fact, it's difficult to imagine that any stayed. These are indeed hard words, and perhaps as with any relationship, the people who remained faithful were those who had an established relationship with Jesus and decided to trust him for what they didn't understand because they had learned already that he was trustworthy. Having a prayer- and scripture-based relationship with God is essential, so that when we hear challenging words about God, we can trust what we know, and trust God for what we don't know yet but are about to learn. It is not God who is changing, but we who are growing in our faith and understanding.

Can you imagine how you would have reacted upon first hearing Jesus' words in today's Gospel reading?