

My Brothers and Sisters,

Today's first reading tells the story of God feeding the Israelites in the desert. In last Sunday's Gospel, Jesus multiplied the loaves and fish, setting the stage for his teaching on the Bread of Life. Each of the Gospels for the next several Sundays contains part of that teaching.

Today's Gospel gives us insight into what faith is and what faith is not. When the people arrived in Capernaum, Jesus said to them, "*Amen, amen, I say to you, you are looking for me not because you saw signs but because you ate the loaves and were filled.*"

During my years at St. Malachy, Sister Edward Ann prepared the second graders for First Communion. Every year, as part of their preparation, she talked to the parents about two kinds of eyes: physical eyes and eyes of faith. We need to see not only with our physical eyes but also with eyes of faith. God's presence, power, and activity are within us and all around us. However, to recognize his presence, power, and activity, we have to see with eyes of faith.

In today's Gospel, Jesus told the people that they had failed to see the miracle of the loaves and fish with eyes of faith. They had failed to recognize God's presence, power, and activity in the miracle. Therefore, they had failed to see the multiplication of the loaves and fish as a sign of the Bread of Life that Jesus was going to give.

Do we see with both physical eyes and eyes of faith, or do we see only with our physical eyes?

Paradoxically, the same people whom Jesus said had failed to see the significance of the miracle of the loaves and fish now demanded a sign from Jesus. When Jesus told them that what God wanted from them was that they believe in Him, they demanded, "*What sign can you do, that we may see and believe in you?*" In other words, they did not really want a sign. They wanted proof.

Because we live in a world of science and technology, we often have a real problem believing in anyone or anything we cannot see. We want proof before we believe. We struggle to see with eyes of faith. However, just a few weeks ago, I pointed out that when couples marry, they make as big an act of faith in each other as the act of faith in God.

My brothers and sisters, the climax of today's Gospel is found in the last verse. Jesus said, "*I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me will never hunger, and whoever believes in me will never thirst.*" Food and drink are life giving. Jesus is telling us that he himself is our food and drink. Therefore, if we want to live fully human lives, if we want to be fully alive, this will only be possible if we see with eyes of faith and truly believe in Jesus, if we have a personal faith in Jesus.

St. Paul wrote to the Galatians, "*It is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me*" [2:20; NRSV]. What makes this passage so important is that although Paul was the strongest personality in the New Testament, he was able to write that it was no longer he who lived but Christ lived in him. The more we believe in Jesus, i.e., the more we allow ourselves to be fed by Jesus, the more Jesus lives in us and the more free and fully ourselves we become.