

21st Sunday per Annum - B
Joshua 24:1-2a, 15-17, 18b;
Ephesians 5:2a, 25-32;
John 6:60-69
Little Flower - 8/23/15

My Brothers and Sisters,

The Gospels for the last few weeks have come from Jesus' Bread of Life discourse in John Chapter 6. The last three weeks have focused on Jesus as the Bread of Life in his person, in his Word, and in the Eucharist.

The prologue to Jesus' discourse on the Bread of Life was the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves and fish. In other words, in the sixth chapter of John's Gospel, Jesus responded to both the physical and spiritual needs of people for life-giving nourishment.

For the last several weeks, I have been thinking that we need to reflect more deeply on our need for nourishment. Physical food meets our most basic physical needs. Jesus, the Bread of Life, meets our most profound spiritual needs. I would suggest, however, that we need more than physical food and more than spiritual food to be fully alive. Therefore, I would ask all of us to consider what feeds our spirit, what is life giving for us.

What do I find life giving? As a priest, celebrating Eucharist and spending time with you as individuals, as couples, or as families are life giving for me. Most of you know that my favorite food is Italian. For me, spending quality time with family and friends is one of the most life-giving things I can do for myself. As much as I am an introvert, I am energized by spending quality time with family and friends. Besides spending quality time with family and friends, I am fed or energized by reading books and articles on theology, history and politics, psychology, and novels. I am always searching for succinct insights. Finally, I enjoy watching an hour of entertainment TV every evening. My question to you is what do you find life giving. What feeds your spirit?

Parents also have to ask these questions concerning their children. By whom and by what are your children being fed? Besides yourselves, who or what are forming your children's faith and values? Who or what are helping to form them into the young men and women they are becoming? In our ever more connected world, I fear that more and more of our young people are being fed and formed by the entertainment media and the Internet.

Today's second reading is St. Paul's well-known passage on marriage. This passage is often quoted as a foundation for our belief that Christian marriage is a sacrament. St. Paul parallels the relationship of husband and wife with the relationship between Christ and the Church and concludes, "*This is a great mystery, but I speak in reference to Christ and the church.*" As Catholics, we believe that a valid marriage between two baptized people is always a sacrament, a sign and realization of Christ's love for the Church. In other words, in their love for each other, Christian couples make Christ's love for the Church visible and real in the world today. Christ's love for the Church is embodied in their love for each other. This is the awesome vocation of Christian marriage.

My brothers and sisters, we have never been more free than we are today to believe or not believe, to practice our faith or not practice our faith, to live our faith or not live our faith. In today's reading from the book of Joshua, Joshua presented the people with a stark choice: to serve or not serve the Lord. Ultimately, this is the choice we all have to make.