

Jerry's Journal



As you probably already know, the readings proclaimed for the weekend Masses rotate over a three-year cycle. Each year features one of the synoptic gospels: Matthew, Mark or Luke. (This group of three is called “synoptic” because, although they are not identical, the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke bear a *similarity* to each other in terms of style and content.) The gospel for this year we are in focuses primarily on the Gospel of Mark. Mark’s Gospel is the briefest or pithiest of the synoptics which accounts for what we experienced last week and will continue over the course of the next four weeks.

Beginning with last weekend, and continuing through August 26, 2018, Holy Mother Church puts Mark’s Gospel on a five- week leave of absence or hiatus and focuses instead on the Gospel of John. The reason for this is because Mark’s Gospel is so concise and succinct, there is simply not enough material to cover an entire year of readings. John’s Gospel was written much later than the other three and the author of John took what we would call today “poetic license” to reflect the development in Christology (the progression and advancement in thought and understanding of the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, Jesus Christ, “the Word made flesh who dwelt among us” - John 1:14.) John’s Gospel is so unique, so distinctive from the synoptics that one is sometimes left wondering if John is writing about the same Jesus found in Matthew, Mark and Luke.

Over the course of five weeks (beginning from last weekend) the Church focuses on one particular chapter in the Gospel of John - the sixth chapter. Why is this one chapter singled out for a total of five weeks? Because John 6 is one of the most poetically written and theologically profound chapters found in any of the four gospels. This cannot be overstated or overemphasized. In fact, it would make sense to read John 6 and then perhaps to reread it again. It is that important and worth that effort. The sixth chapter of the Gospel of John is loaded with nuance, subtlety and a style that so mysteriously evolves that it leaves the characters and the crowds mentioned astounded, confused and scandalized.

Central to John 6 is the Eucharist, the Bread of Life. The Eucharist is so vital, so fundamental and essential to who we are as Catholics the intent, in giving us five weeks of John 6, is so that we will have a deeper understanding and sense of reverence for the precious gift of the Bread of Life we receive when we approach the table of the Lord.

The sixth chapter of John is often referred to by way of its subtitle, the Bread of Life Discourse. In the weeks that follow you will see the revealing of Jesus as the Bread of Life. The Son of God will not only unpack the term “Bread of Life” but He will also lay out the demands that come from our reception of the Eucharist.

Just to give you some food for thought, and to try and bring things up to date, chapter 6 of John’s Gospel begins with the “Multiplication of the Loaves and Fishes.” The distinctive response of Jesus to the crowds who had come to hear His teaching and then

were hungry and had nothing to eat, is to care for their most basic and immediate need - hunger. (What implication does this have for our lives?)

In some respect Jesus' feeding the crowd backfires on Him. The people want to make Him king. Of course, Jesus is a king, Christ the King, but the crowd's definition of king is more conventional: political power, military might, pomp and circumstance. This, of course, is not how Jesus perceives His Messianic Reign. He envisions Himself as the Suffering Servant who will win by losing {His life} by becoming wealthy through poverty and demonstrate love through loneliness (by dying on the cross for the sake of humanity after being abandoned by the Apostles save one.) John 6, time and time again, serves to demonstrate there is a divergence between how Jesus is thinking and how the crowd is thinking.

In the gospel for this weekend (John 6:24-35), Jesus comes across as the reluctant teacher. He forces the crowds of people to search Him out. He then admonishes the crowds for their ulterior reason for following Him (they wish to be fed - again.) He challenges the crowd to reflect on a fundamental but essential element of a spiritual life - to accomplish the works of God. Jesus emphasizes the need for the people "to believe." The crowd responds by saying before they will do what Jesus is asking, but first they want another "sign" (John's code term for "miracle") that is, they want to be fed again.

There is clearly confusion or misinterpretation in the conversation Jesus is having with the crowds. Jesus is speaking to people on a spiritual level, but the crowd is thinking more in physical terms. Jesus is calling people to consume "the bread come down from Heaven" which will satisfy people spiritually (the Eucharist), while people long only for physical nourishment.

The gospel for this weekend concludes with Jesus saying *He is* the bread that has come down from heaven. When the crowd hears this what comes to their minds is the manna that the Israelites ate as they journeyed from Egypt to the Promised Land. Jesus wants to nurture people spiritually, while the crowd only wishes to have their bodily cravings alleviated. These two different trains of thought will lead to hard feelings, disappointment and bitterness in the weeks ahead as the Bread of Life Discourse continues to unfold and the Word of God is broken open for us to understand more clearly.

Fr Jerry Slowinski



"Marc" My Words

Jesus said, "Do not work for food that perishes but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you." The crowd said to Jesus, "What can we do to accomplish



the works of God?" I think that is a great question. It is a question that we need to ask ourselves. The answer is simple but not necessarily simple to do. We need to believe

in and have a relationship with Jesus. A relationship that goes beyond the hour or so we spend at Mass each week. Jesus is always with us whether we see the signs of his presence or not. We can do nothing on our own. The works that we do are done in and through God only if we allow ourselves to be guided by him and not by other forces or factors. Jesus will give us the grace to accomplish what we need to do. Jesus said, “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me will never hunger, and whoever believes in me will never thirst.” This special grace is here for those who seek it.

Grace isn't enough though. We must use the grace we have been given. That is the works that Jesus spoke of. We must share the Gospel message by our works, that is, the actions and example of our lives. It is the way that we can believe and follow Jesus and experience all God has to offer us. He offers us his ...

Peace, Love, and Blessings,
Deacon Marc



TAKING COMMUNION TO YOUR LOVED ONES WHO ARE HOMEBOUND

St. Paul of Tarsus has always provided pyx for our parishioners to borrow when they take Communion to Catholic family and friends who are homebound. We never seem to get the majority of them back and never recorded who borrowed them. We have people who are in need of a pyx to take Communion to their loved ones, but were unable, due to a lack of pyx. Our drawer seemed always empty.

We have just purchased 10 pyx in an effort to be able to let more parishioners borrow ours. We will now be requiring any person who is borrowing our pyx to go to the parish office and sign one out, providing us with your name and phone number. They are numbered on the bottom. You will be allowed to borrow them for 30 days after which they will need to be returned or re-signed out. Hopefully with the purchase of these pyx and our new procedure our homebound family and friends will be able to receive the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Jesus without interruption. Thank you for your cooperation!

Deacon Marc