

Homily for 18th Sunday in Ordinary Time

An old man goes to a local diner every day for lunch. He always orders the soup du jour. One day the old man asks for a little more bread. So the next day the manager tells the waitress to give him four slices of bread instead of just two. But that day the old man once again asks the manager if he could have “a little more bread.” So the next day the manager tells the waitress to give him eight slices of bread. “How was your meal today, sir?” the manager asks. “Good...But you could give a little more bread,” comes the reply. So...the next day the manager tells the waitress to give him a whole loaf of bread with his soup. And when the manager once again asks how the meal was, the old man replies by saying: “It was good, but you could give just a little more bread.”

The manager is now obsessed with seeing this customer say that he is satisfied with his meal. So he goes to the bakery, and orders a six-foot long loaf of bread. When the elderly man comes in as usual the next day, the waitress and the manager cut the loaf in half, butter the entire length of each half, and lay it along the counter, right next to his bowl of soup. The old man sits down, and devours both his bowl of soup, and both halves of the six-foot-long loaf of bread. The manager now thinks he will get the answer he is looking for. So when the old man comes up to pay for

his meal, the manager asks “How was your meal TODAY, sir?” The old man replies: “Oh, it was good as usual, but I see you are back to giving only two slices of bread.”

The elderly man, the Israelites in the desert with Moses and the people who chased Jesus looking for more bread...they have a lot in common. They were never satisfied. They always wanted more. They were locked into their own world of self-concern. No matter how many pieces of bread...it would never be enough.

It's easy to be like the people who populate today's readings. It is easy because the values of our culture often lock us into self-centered and self-absorbed concerns. The values of our culture imprison us with our own agendas. The values of our culture have little or no sense that the world isn't about me but about all of us who are God's children.

This is why Jesus in the Gospel tells us that the remedy of faith is to work not for that which perishes but for that which endures to eternal life. And that which endures to eternal life are “the works of God.” And we achieve the works of God when our faith rests in the Son of God who loved us so much that He stretched His arms out on the cross and gave of Himself without reservation. To achieve the works of God is to follow Him whose life we share each time we receive the Eucharist. To achieve the works of God is to become Christ who is the Bread of Life.

St. Augustine would often end Mass by saying to his people: “Be what you eat.” As we receive the Eucharist today may we “be” that loving and caring presence of Christ in our world today. May we be motivated by a joyful gratitude for what we already have and by a constant concern for the needs and concerns of others. May we attend not only to our own hungers but to the hungers of those in our world who suffer with empty stomachs, aching hearts and lonely spirits constantly crying out for help.