



August 1, 2021

EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

LECTIONARY #113B

Exodus 16:2-4, 12-15

Psalm 78:3-4, 23-24, 25, 54

Ephesians 4:17, 20-24

John 6:24-35

Prepare for the Word

The following elements may be used by the catechist, teacher, or youth minister to prepare to facilitate today's session with teens. You may integrate this information into the reflection and discussion on today's readings. The handout for this Sunday's session is found online. Visit www.ltp.org/lwgr to access the PDF and JPG files. Send to teens by email or upload to social media before gathering for today's session.

Leader's Context

Today's Gospel comes from the beginning of the "Bread of Life Discourse" in John's Gospel (see John 6:22-71). Although that discourse is a fairly involved theological tract, today's reading allows us to focus on a few elements. First, we are able to look at how people interacted with Jesus in his early ministry—they were far more focused on his miracles than on his teachings! Second, this Gospel allows us to reflect on the concept of spiritual and physical hunger, and how those needs are met differently. Today we will reflect on what it means to be spiritually hungry, and how that hunger is met. Our spiritual nourishment comes from God and is mediated through Jesus Christ.

Q FOCUS: *Christ feeds us so that we might never hunger again.*

Liturgical Calendar Connection

On August 6, the Church celebrates the Feast of the Transfiguration of the Lord. The transfiguration helped the disciples see the coming glory of Christ, even though he had told them he must suffer and die. The disciples' desire to stay in that moment of glory with Christ is reminiscent of our desire to stay in the moments of "mountaintop experiences." Eventually

we must come back down to the real world, but we come knowing that the glory of Christ is always present with us.

Church Teaching Connection

"God's work does not consist so much in 'doing' things, but in 'believing' in Him whom He sent. This means that faith in Jesus allows us to carry out God's works. If we allow ourselves to be involved in this loving and trusting relationship with Jesus, we will be able to perform good works that exude the fragrance of the Gospel for the good and needs of our brothers and sisters. The Lord invites us not to forget that, if it is necessary to worry about bread, it is even more important to nurture our relationship with Him, to strengthen our faith in Him, who is the 'bread of life' who came to satisfy our hunger for truth, our hunger for justice and our hunger for love" (Pope Francis, Angelus Message, August 5, 2018).

Hear the Word

Use this resource, a lectionary, or a Bible to proclaim the reading. The book should be held reverently or placed on a lectern. If possible, light a candle that is placed near where the Gospel will be proclaimed. Gesture for teens to stand.

Gospel Acclamation

Use the same musical setting that is used in your parish or at school Masses. Teens may help with music and proclaim the Gospel.

Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel

John 6:24-35

Reader: A reading from the holy Gospel according to John.

All: Glory to you, O Lord.

All make the sign of the cross on their forehead, lips, and heart.

When the crowd saw that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they themselves got into boats and came to Capernaum looking for Jesus. And when they found him across the sea they said to him,

"Rabbi, when did you get here?" Jesus answered them and said, "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. Do not work for food that perishes but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For on him the Father, God, has set his seal." So they said to him, "What can we do to accomplish the works of God?" Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in the one he sent." So they said to him, "What sign can you do, that we may see and believe in you? What can you do? Our ancestors ate manna in the desert, as it is written: / *He gave them bread from heaven to eat.*" / So Jesus said to them, "Amen, amen, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave the bread from heaven; my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."

So they said to him, "Sir, give us this bread always." Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me will never hunger, and whoever believes in me will never thirst."

Reader: The Gospel of the Lord.

All: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Everyone may be seated.

Reflect on the Word

When beginning the reflection and discussion about today's readings, first refer to the handout for today. Ask teens what they learned about themselves and about Christian discipleship from performing the action for the week and journaling. Ask teens about the readings of the day: What struck them? What do they think the readings mean? How do the readings affect their own lives? Then begin the following reflection:

Today's Gospel reading takes place only a day after the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves and fish, where Jesus fed five thousand with five loaves and two fish. We heard this reading last week, on the Eighteenth Sunday of Ordinary Time. The crowd in today's reading is the same as the crowd who were fed in that story. So these people all ate, stayed overnight, realized that Jesus was gone, and then crammed onto boats to go chase after him!

► **Why were they so desperate to follow him? What do you think they were hoping to get from another encounter with Jesus?**

► **How would you respond if you had been one of those people in the crowd and had seen the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves and fish?**

If you were hungry and someone made food appear out of nowhere and gave it to you freely, you might want to stick around that person, right? You would probably be hoping that it might happen again or that he would work some other great miracle. But Jesus invites the crowd (and us) to look beyond the superficial nature of the miracle. Yes, he provided an abundance of food from very little. To people who worked hard to earn their daily wage so they could buy food, this was a great miracle.

Helping them to better understand his actions, Jesus encourages the crowd to work toward the food that brings them to eternal life. He shifts the focus from our physical need of food to our need for spiritual nourishment. Not quite getting the point, the crowd asks him for another sign (that is, for more food.) They compare his actions to those of Moses, who provided manna to the Israelites while they were wandering in the desert. Jesus points out that it was God, not Moses, who provided that manna, nourishment when they had none. And he tells them that God is also the one who provides the bread of heaven, which will give them eternal life.

► **Reflect for a moment: if you could choose to be fed (physically) for every day for the rest of your life, or fed/saved (spiritually) for all of eternity after that, which would you choose, and why?**

One of the main lessons Jesus is teaching the crowd is that he goes beyond the prophets and leaders of the Old Testament. Like Moses, he provides bread to us. But unlike the bread from Moses, which is here one day and gone the next, the bread from Jesus—the bread from heaven, Jesus' very self—will provide us with eternal life.

► **How do we understand being fed physically and being fed spiritually?**

A couple hours after we eat a meal, we feel hungry again. Have you ever had a meal that prevented you from ever feeling hunger again? Of course not; we

eventually need to eat again even if it was a very filling meal. But our spiritual hunger, that we feel our souls, can be filled. Sometimes it's difficult to describe that hunger. It can feel like a yearning to be accepted, to belong. It can feel like a thirst for inner peace, or comfort from anxiety. When we feel this emptiness, we need to turn to Christ, who is the Bread of Life. Living in Christ allows us to nourish that hunger in ways that are much more permanent than a single meal nourishing our bodies.

Wrapping It Up

Consider these points to conclude the discussion and reflection. Integrate the thoughts and ideas that surfaced during the discussion as well as the "Church Teaching Connection" on page 2.

Some of Jesus' early followers were only focused on what he could do for them. But Jesus taught them and gave them a new path to follow.

Jesus goes beyond the signs performed in the Old Testament and becomes for us the bread of everlasting life.

When we experience spiritual hunger, we need spiritual nourishment. We find that nourishment in our relationship with Christ and life in the Christian community.

Act on the Word

Feeding Our Spiritual Hungers

For this activity, you will need paper, art supplies, and pens.

Have the teens break into small groups. In each group, give them the materials for this activity. Invite them to brainstorm a list of spiritual hungers. What are some things that we hunger for in our soul? What might the spiritual hungers be of people who are not in their same socio-economic classes? Have a short conversation with the whole group about what each small group discussed.

Next, invite the groups to think about what would be included in a balanced/healthy diet. If they like, they can draw or diagram their ideas. This does

not have to be scientific, but should draw their attention to the need for varied types of nourishment to address all our physical needs.

Once they have done this, they can move on to the last part of this exercise—creating a balanced spiritual diet. Just as food must meet certain nutritional qualities, so too does our spiritual nourishment need to meet our spiritual hungers. What are ways they can be nourished by Christ? How can they participate in spiritual nourishment? How can their communities or their chosen activities contribute to a balanced spiritual diet? Encourage them to be creative and practical.

At the end of your time together, have the groups share their ideas with one another. Why did they choose what they did? Which types of spiritual nourishment were common? Which ones were unique? Challenge the young people to put this balanced diet in place in their own lives.

Closing Prayer

*God of love,
you gave us your Son
as the true bread sent from heaven
that satisfies our hunger
and makes us thirst for you.
May we always be grateful for this
precious gift.
Send us out into a world
that tries to fill its longings with so many
things but you.
May we be tangible signs of a love
that never fails.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.
Amen.*

For Next Sunday

To help teens prepare for next Sunday's Mass, print, email, or share on a blog or social media the handout found on the next page. The JPG and PDF files are available at www.ltp.org/lwgr. Encourage teens to attend Mass with family or friends.