

Eleventh Week in Ordinary Time
June 16, 2024
Year of the Most Holy Eucharist
Reflection #25

“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. But I told you that although you have seen [me], you do not believe. Everything that the Father gives me will come to me, and I will not reject anyone who comes to me, because I came down from heaven not to do my own will but the will of the one who sent me.’”
(John 6:35-38)

The great church leader, Saint Anselm, is famously quoted as saying: “*Credo ut intelligam*” meaning “I believe in order that I may understand.” This statement of his sums up, quite nicely, our Eucharistic reflection for this weekend. The Jewish religious leaders took pride in their knowledge of the teachings of God through Moses, His servant. They are often found questioning Jesus based upon their understanding of these teachings. In the selection of Saint John’s Gospel, as quoted above, Jesus declares to those around Him the knowledge they profess is incomplete. They do not recognize Jesus as the One who is to come, foretold by these same teachings.

In his book on the Gospel of Saint John, Stephen Ray expressed this thought in these words: “The Jews claimed to know God and his commands. Yet, Jesus says that since they do not know him who was sent by the Father, they obviously do not know the Father.” My friends, this is a rather bold statement Mr. Ray is making. We could spend time debating IF his statement is true in light of our knowledge of the events the Jewish leaders directly affected in the life of Jesus. However, I do not think this exercise fruitful for our limited time. Rather, I propose we ponder the question: “Do I believe?”

Do I believe that Jesus is the Bread of Life who has come down from the Father? Everything we have attempted to explain thus far leads us to this fundamental question. We have reflected upon His being the fulfillment of what was promised through the holy saints of the Old Testament. We have considered as true the miraculous multiplication of the loaves and fish; along with His mastery of creation by walking upon the waters. Yet, are we prepared to make that final leap into the darkness where faith is our only safety net? As your priest, I cannot fully explain to you the Eucharist. I am not God and to explain God is a thing only God can do. You and I can only attempt to use our created intellects to glimpse into the expanse which is God. We must, as those Jewish people listening to Him that day, let go of our preconceived ideas of who God is and listen to His words, His Word who reveals Himself and in doing so, reveals His Father. Jesus says that He is the Bread of Life which has been given to feed us both physically and spiritually. As Bread, He is greater than the manna in the desert. As God, it is He who gives this Bread, Himself, to us. He did this because it IS the Will of the Father. God wants us to receive Him in a very real and profound way. It is different from what the Jewish people had experienced up to that moment. It is the way He intends for us to receive Him from that moment unto our own. Are we willing to listen to His words, His Word, and believe what He tells us? Or, are we no different from the Jewish peoples of His day? Like them, we already have our minds made up as to who He is and how we are called to receive Him. And like them, we fail to see the fullness of the Presence of God residing within our midst.