

Tenth Week in Ordinary Time
June 9, 2024
Year of the Most Holy Eucharist
Reflection #24

“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.’” (John 6:25-29)

In today’s selection of the sixth chapter of Saint John’s Gospel (quoted above), Jesus begins the introductory phase of His famous “Bread of Life” discourse. In these few verses, He will offer three points for their consideration. I would like to spend this time reflecting upon only two of these three in the following paragraphs. As the old saying goes: “It is better to focus upon one or two things and perform them well, as opposed to trying to do many things and performing them poorly.”

Our first point to reflect upon is Jesus’ insistence that they must refocus their priorities from physical bread which sustains their daily lives to spiritual bread which can provide eternal life. For His listener then, for us today, this statement sounds easy. I need to seek heavenly bread and not physical bread, got it. Actually, do I have it? Well, No, it is very confusing. Jesus says I must seek out heavenly bread, then why do I ask for my “daily bread” each time I pray the Lord’s Prayer, the same one He taught us to pray. Should I focus on daily bread? I do have to eat and, for those who have families, so too must their families eat. We could say this statement refers to more than just food. We could say that Jesus is speaking of all material goods which can become a near occasion of sin for anyone. He does encourage the rich young man to go and sell his material possessions before following Him (Mt 19:16-22, Mk 10:17-22, Lk 18:18-23). He also says how difficult it is for one who is rich to enter the Kingdom of God (Mt 19:23-30, Mk 10:23-31, Lk 18:24-30). Is it necessary to abandon our need for material goods; drawing a circle around ourselves hoping that God will provide those items necessary to fulfill our needs? Searching our Christian history, there are many people who would abandon their quest to attain worldly goods and go away to live as hermits, monks and nuns. The way these individuals chose to live their faith lives may not be conducive to how you or I am called to live today. What we must consider, however, is the amount of time and energy we place upon gaining these items. Honestly, are we working to live or living to work? Using myself as the example, if I were unable to fulfill my responsibilities as your pastor, what would the Archbishop do? He would replace me. In many situations, you or I are not irreplaceable. This does not mean we should not provide our best effort in whatever field of work we are doing. It does mean that we should not let our profession dictate every aspect of our daily lives. We are much more to God than just another cog in a machine.

Second, the bread He provides, the bread of eternal life, must be worked for. Did you catch that statement of His? He directly says that He will provide this necessary food, but we

must work for it. Why, I ask you, must we work for it and He not give it to us out of His generosity? The answer is found in value. We tend to value things that cost us more. They mean more to us because of our effort to attain them. If eternal life was something free only needing to be asked for, then would we value it? To find an answer to this question, we need only consider this: if, as a teenager, you were given a brand-new automobile by your parents then would you treat it the same as a used automobile, one which you had to work, a few years, very hard to finally purchase? Look around this church today, the Bread of Life we profess as the Body and Blood of Jesus is present, offered freely to us in this Liturgy. Could it be that because it is freely offered so few take advantage of it, so few attend to receive it and so many no longer believe in it?