

Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

A cop pulls over a carload of nuns. The cop says, "Sister, this is a 55 MPH highway. Why are you going so slow?" The Sister replies, "Sir, I saw a lot of signs that said 41, not 55." The cop answers, "Oh, Sister, that's not the speed limit, that's the name of the highway you are on!" The Sister says, "Oh! Silly me! Thanks for letting me know. I'll be more careful." At this point, the cop looks in the backseat where the other nuns are shaking and trembling. The cop asks, "Excuse me, Sister, what's wrong with your friends back there? They are shaking something terrible." The Sister answers, "We just got off Highway 101."

Dear Friends,

This weekend, we celebrate the feast of St. John Vianney, the Patron Saint of Parish Priests. I will start my homily with this quote from him, "There is nothing so great as the Eucharist. If God had something more precious, He would have given it to us."

Today we are asked to promote vocations. Let us pray that we get enough vocations to the priesthood and religious life or to be a deacon.

The readings today tell that God provides our sustenance. In the first reading, we learned from Israel that when they received Manna, they asked Moses, "What is this?" Moses said, "This is the bread that the Lord has given from heaven." God provided food from heaven.

In the first reading, people were complaining about the food and being hungry. The Israelites were out in the desert, and they began to suffer from hunger. So great was their hunger that they longed for the 'good old days' of slavery in Egypt, when at least they had their fill of bread. What they did not know was that soon they would be eating "the bread of the mighty." They were soon to find out that God would take care of their physical and spiritual needs.

In the Gospel, Jesus talks about accepting him in their midst not just as a miracle worker who will take care of their physical hunger, rather who is giving himself totally to them. This chapter is a conversation between Jesus and Jewish people to make them believe in Christ.

There were four dialogue exchanges happening between Jesus and the crowd. The first was, "When did you get here?" Jesus found out that they sought him for material reason. He challenged them to go beyond the fulfillment of material needs in life. They ought to be seeking out Jesus because he can give them eternal life.

The second was, "What can we do to accomplish the works of God?" Jesus replies that they must have faith in the one sent from God. But in the third dialogue, the crowd reveals

their inability to see Jesus' true identity. They ask Jesus for a sign so that they might know that Jesus is from God. How strange this sounds since Jesus has just fed more than 5000 people. What is more expected?

The crowd could not go beyond the surface of the sign. Jesus corrects their inability and blindness to not identify him as God and asking for more signs. They were not able to get out of their old ways. The conclusion of the dialogue reveals the crowd's blindness. They ask for what Jesus has just told them they have found: "Sir, give us this bread always." Jesus answers plainly that he himself is the Bread of Life they seek.

In the second reading, St. Paul brings a beautiful connection to us to put away our old self and be renewed in spirit of truth. Jesus has given himself totally to us. He wants us to believe in him deeply and change our lives from the old sinful ways to new life in Christ which will bring us eternal life.

Jonathan Rumie, the actor in *The Chosen*, shared at the Eucharistic Congress, 'I am reel Jesus. The real Jesus is there in the Eucharist.' And how emotional he was as they were shooting the last supper.

If we believe in the true presence in the Eucharist, we know that Christ can change us. This week I challenge you to think of something that we can change in our lives as a result of Christ's presence truly alive within us.