

# A Message from Mary Beth

Our gospel readings these past two weeks have focused on food-- the feeding of the 5,000 last week and then Jesus' explanation of the Old Testament story when God fed Jews with manna (or bread) which fell from heaven when they found themselves on a long journey in the wilderness.

The Jews whom he addressed were very familiar with this story as it was their ancestors who received this divine bread. In ancient Jewish religion, faith was learned through the handing down of stories through the generations and so Jesus' listeners knew this story well.

They were a nation where living conditions were harsh and many were poor; the availability of food was never taken for granted. You couldn't hop to a grocery store like we do today and choose from an abundance of food products, both fresh and preserved.

So when Jesus addressed the crowd, he knew that his audience would listen. They had recently experienced his miracle of feeding 5,000 people and were open to his words. They asked Jesus for another sign of his power and divinity, expecting another material miracle, hoping perhaps for more food.

But Jesus chose, instead, to talk about another kind of food-- spiritual food. He told them they needed to find food which comes from God. He called it the bread which comes from heaven. But this was different from the mana of their ancestors . This was bread to feed the soul, and offer the salvation of eternal life. The Jews were meant to understand this because they knew of the manna in the wilderness-- God gave this to save physical lives.

But Jesus now asked them to seek something even more life-giving-- the bread of spiritual life.

They were intrigued and wanted to know how to get this bread. Jesus answered them very peculiarly:

*I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry or thirsty.*

It must have been hard for them to understand, not yet having seen or heard of Jesus' resurrection.

Today, we have the benefit of generations of witnesses to Christian faith and the divinely inspired words of the Bible. We have the benefit, too, of sharing the bread of Communion each week where we remember the sacrifice Jesus made to save us from our sins.

But do we feed on the bread of life, in our daily lives ?

Are we willing to stretch ourselves on our spiritual journeys of faith and service, looking for new ways to seek our saving Lord?

Jesus offers us personal salvation as the bread of life, but as faithful Christians, we are called to share this bread with others, to be generous in our faith, following God who fed the ancient Jews with bread from heaven and his Jesus who fed 5,000 with a couple fish and five loaves of barley.

May you find love and joy in the bread of life and a desire to share this great bounty.

Mary-Beth

