

B - Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time - August 1, 2021

Deacon Steve Livingston

Every once in a while, I feel the need to **clean house** ... to sort through all **my** treasures ... and of course, the rest of the family's **junk**. ... That's the way it works, you know ... in the **first** person they are treasures ... in the second or **third** person it is **junk!** Any way ... I sort through my stuff to see what clutter I can give away ... or throw away ... and I always **find** ... **many** things that I've not even **seen** in years ... **all** things that were so important to me at **some** point in my life. And I look at these things **now** and ... I cannot ... **imagine** why! It turns out ... that all these things ... that I wanted **so** badly at the time ... are really just so much **junk!**

And it occurs to me that this is **exactly** what Our Lord is **talking** about! Our "**stuff**" is so much perishable **food** that ... sooner or later ... will fail to satisfy ... and once more ... leave us hungry ... longing for ... for what? Well ... If we **listen** ... to what our Lord is telling us ... He is giving us the answer. "**I** am the bread of life ...". **I** will not leave you hungry ... **I** will satisfy ... **I** will **not** disappoint! ... **I** am the food that does **not** perish!

And on some level ... we all **know** this. After all, we come to Mass and faithfully listen to the Gospel ... week after week ... and we've heard all this before and ... we **know** it to be true. But then ... **after** Mass ... we leave church and ... go live in the so-called "**real**" world ... and there ... we hear very different gospels. The world preaches many ... many ... secular gospels ...but perhaps ... the loudest of all ... and ... perhaps ... the most destructive ... we hear the gospel of "**stuff**". It screams at us that to be truly happy we need to acquire this car ... or this piece of electronic equipment ... or this trendy whatsit. And for sure ... most of these things are **not** evil ... and a few we actually need ... but the gospel of "**stuff**" tells us that we need it **all** ... and that the **more** we get ... the **happier** we will be. The gospel of "**stuff**" implies "the one who **dies** ... with the most "**stuff**" ... wins!

And sometimes ... even though ... we know better ... we can and do ... from time to time ... still get caught up and **beguiled** by the message of consumerism ... the gospel of "**stuff**". Sometimes this is even reflected in our prayer lives ... when it consists almost exclusively of asking our God for "**stuff**". Sometimes ... it is as though we are telling God: "we believe in you, but: Prove it by giving us what we want! ... Give us this sign!" Sometimes we approach our God as though there were a **contractual** relationship where we provide prayers ... God grants our every wish. And when He doesn't ... like the ancient Hebrews ... we grumble.

Well ... God never signed a contract to fulfill our every whim. God is under **no** obligation to us at all. There **is** no contract! ... We **do** have ... however ... His **covenant** with us: ... We worship Him ... We love Him ... We have faith in Him ... We trust Him ... We are faithful to Him He loves us ... He cares for us ... He forgives us ... He fulfills us ... He nourishes us He gives us **true** bread from heaven. And in his in His great love for us He seals this covenant with the sacrifice of His own body ... with His own precious blood.

Now ... in His **infinite** ... love and understanding ... He **knows** that ... with our very, very human ... **attention deficit disorder** ... we often get **distracted** by the gospel of **“stuff”** and have trouble focusing on our part of the covenant. ... So, to help us ... He gives us the greatest possible reminder ... that greatest of all possible gifts ... His own body and blood ... truly **present** ... in a very **real** and very tangible way in **Eucharist**. Jesus **is** the “Bread of Life” and **this** bread will **not** disappoint. On **this** ... we have His promise: “... whoever comes to me will never hunger, and whoever believes in me will never thirst.”