

## Sunday.19

This the third Sunday that we have read from the same chapter of John's Gospel, chapter 6, and we are going to continue to read from this same chapter for two more Sundays. So by the end of this month we will have read from the same chapter five times. The chapter is a long one, having 71 verses. It begins very simply with the story of the feeding of the five thousand with five barley loaves and two fish. The people are so impressed by this miracle that they want to make Jesus king. So Jesus flees. But they find him. Then he tells them that they are seeking him because they have been fed, but they should seek him to get food that does not perish. And with that the conversation deepens, passing from physical feeding to spiritual feeding with bread from heaven that will give them life forever. Jesus then identifies himself as this heavenly bread. His hearers cannot accept this. He cannot be bread from heaven because they know his parents. He is from earth, not heaven. But Jesus insists: "I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever, and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world."

We accept Jesus as the bread from heaven. We accept him as the bread of our lives. Not all cultures eat bread. Ours does, and there

are some people who don't consider a meal a meal unless bread is part of it, while others of us often skip the bread for fancier food. But it is clear what Jesus means when he says that he is our bread. He is the staple of our lives. We cannot live without him. And he promises us not just help here but life forever.

Let us not get careless just because Jesus is the ordinary staple of our religious lives. We Catholics pray most often by celebrating Mass, and we are encouraged to receive the bread of life when we attend Mass. Not to do so would be like going to a dinner and not eating. So every Sunday we "hit the rail," as we used to say when there were rails. And some of us do so even daily.

If in receiving Jesus in the Eucharist he transforms us into himself, then we should be pretty Christ-like by now. If we are not, then something has gone wrong. Have we eaten the bread without realizing what we are doing?

And if we want to know what we should look like as those who have been transformed into Christ through the heavenly bread, then we don't have to go any farther than today's second reading from Ephesians because it describes what life among us, who are the body of Christ, should be like.

We don't have to read any further, do we.