

Again, this week in the Gospel of John we hear Jesus proclaiming that that he is the bread of life, sent down from the Father, telling us not only who he is, but also giving a straightforward explanation of how this all works. "Very truly I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life within you. If you will partake of me in body and blood, you will have eternal life. The one who eats of this bread will live forever." This is not a parable, or a riddle, or a nice little story to help us understand who exactly this man really is, recognized as someone who grew up around here. He tells us in no uncertain terms who he is, where he came from, and what you need to do in order to have eternal life in heaven.

The Book of Common Prayer states that the Holy Eucharist is the sacrament commanded by Christ for the continual remembrance of his life, death, and resurrection, until his coming again.

Why is the Eucharist called a sacrifice? Because the Eucharist, the Church's sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, is the way by which the sacrifice of Christ is made present to us, and in which he unites us to his one offering of himself.

The outward and visible sign in the Eucharist is the bread and wine, given and received according to Christ's command. The inward and spiritual grace in Communion is the body and blood of Christ given to his people and received by faith.

It is required of us when we come to the rail that we examine our lives, repent of our sins, and be in love and charity with all people. In return we are forgiven our sins, strengthened in our union with Christ, and given a foretaste of our nourishment in eternal life.

Christ gave to us six of the most important words that we can ever take to heart, "I Am the Bread of Life."

If you remember the Gospel reading from last week, Jesus said, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me shall never be hungry, and whoever believes in me shall never be thirsty." Now I don't know about you but whenever I read this passage from John I get the "Bread of Life" song on my mind for days. Last Sunday, I was the last to leave the church. I drove over to Phoebe Main with an arrangement of flowers from the 10:00 a.m. service to give to our own Lou Little. That song was on my mind as I drove up Third Ave. and being that no one else was there to hear me, I sang it out loud as I reached the hospital and turned into the parking lot- which was strangely deserted, even for a Sunday. I was driving through the lot when I first saw him. A young man cutting across, quickly walking towards the main entrance. He was young, maybe 22, he was wearing pajama bottoms and flip flops, with a dirty white t-shirt and had a small bag clutched across his chest. He looked very childlike with his fair skin and strawberry blond hair. He walked with a determination to get to the main hospital doors and I had a hard time taking my eyes off him as I pulled in under the drive thru and illegally parked behind the Phoebe van (I figured act fast, and explain later). My plan was to quickly get out with the flowers, grab some money out of my purse in the back seat to hand the young man, and tell him to use it to get some lunch, my first thought, as in most cases, was to feed him. He reached the front desk before me and standing behind him I was struck by the poor shape that he was in. He must have slept outside, or in a crack house, or other horrible place. He was telling the young woman at the desk that he needed help and needed to get to the emergency room. She was trying to explain that he could not go through the hospital to get to the ER, that if he could he needed to get around to the back of the building. There were no chairs nearby so he went over and sat down by the front door on the floor and leaned up against the plate glass window. There he was, a broken, sick,

unwashed, unknown, helpless, lost young man - the type of person that Jesus embraced and helped, and even cured. A host of thoughts were running thru my head all at once, should I go try to sit beside him, give him the money I had clinched in my hand, tell them to get me a wheelchair and I could push him to the ER? But before I could do any of those things, a security guard appeared and escorted him out the front doors, hopefully to drive him around to the ER to get help of some kind. At least that is what I hope happened. Suddenly I went numb all over. In my head I kept hearing "I am the Bread of Life", as I realized that I have never seen anyone who was more in need of that bread than that young man who had been only six feet away from me. There was something Holy in that moment. I had not helped this child of God in any way, I never got to speak to him, and he probably never realized that I was even there. But believe me when I tell you that Christ was there, and I know it just as well as I stand here today telling you this story, doing the job I vowed as a Deacon to do, to bring the cares of the world into the church and to share them with you, and lay them down before the altar.

So, to finish my story, I left the flowers to be taken up to Lou, made my way back to my illegally parked car, and drove home. But it was impossible to shake the feeling that I missed the opportunity to do something to help the guy in the pajama pants. Or was that not supposed to happen, I don't know. But after thinking about him for a few days, I realized that I had been praying for him since Sunday, and I mean praying hard and often. In my prayers, I finally gave him the name "Michael" so that it would be easier to pray. I am bringing Michael to you this morning and asking you to take him into your heart and pray for him to find the bread of life. While you are at it, pray for all of those lost and broken souls that wander the streets of our

community, looking for crumbs that will help sustain them for another day.

I think we are also wandering and searching for answers, and help, for our fears of sickness, violence, crime, and general division among each other. We can so easily become blind and forget that the answer to our weakness and fear is right before us in partaking of Christ's body and blood in the Eucharist.

There is a short writing by Christian writer Brene' Brown that I would like to share with you.

"My Mom taught us never to look away from people's pain.

The lesson was simple: Don't look away, don't look down, don't pretend not to see hurt.

Look people in the eye, even when their pain is overwhelming.

And when you are in pain, find the people who can look you in the eye.

We need to know we are not alone, especially when we are hurting.

This lesson is one of the greatest gifts of my life."

So, may we all have the strength to not look away from the pain of the world around us, of those both close to us, and to the Michael's that are put into our path. Christ gave to us all of himself to fortify us with love and faith and the assurance of eternal life with him, The Bread of Life. May we always be worthy and open to sharing that Bread to all those outside these doors.

Amen.

