

18th Sunday in Ordinary Time

A little girl walked to and from school every day. One morning the weather looked bad. By afternoon the wind had whipped up, and lightening began to crackle in the sky. The girl's mother, full of concern, got into her car and drove along the road to school. She spotted her daughter walking up the street. At each flash of lightening, the child would stop, look up, and smile. The mother drove up alongside the child, lowered her window and called, "*What are you doing?*" The child answered, "*I'm trying to look pretty because God keeps taking my picture.*"

Unfortunately, as we get older, we get more sophisticated. We know God isn't up there with a flash camera. But this little girl was able to go beyond just seeing some flashes of light in the sky to see the presence of God. Are we able to go beyond the appearance and see the hand of God, the face of God? Or are we like the people of the Old Testament who were complaining, despite the fact the God gave them manna every day without having to work for it. Or are we like the people of the gospel asking: "What signs can you work for us so that we may believe in you?" after having just seen Jesus feeding the 5,000 with five loaves of bread and two fish. To them Jesus said, "I will give you the bread of eternal life," meaning the Eucharist.

We continue today with our five-week study of the sixth chapter of John. It began last week with the multiplication of loaves and fish with all its Eucharistic implications. Jesus provided bread and fish for the multitudes, and they came to him the following day looking for more. They were not concerned with the sign that He performed. They were just concerned with free food. Whatever sign he offered, the gift that Jesus gave was the gift of himself for the life of the world. The multitude lacked the ability to see anything beyond the food that they ate. Mother Teresa could look beyond the filth and sores of the people she cared for and see the face of Jesus. Mahatma Gandhi and John Paul II could look into the faces of their assassins, and recognize a brother whom they could forgive. Jesus was able to look beyond the sins of the woman caught in adultery, and see in her a daughter of God. Jesus was able to look beyond the sins of Zacchaeus, and see in him a child of God.

If we are to accept the bread that God gives to us in Jesus, it is essential to look beyond it to see the body and blood of Christ. Learning to look beyond in this way remains the challenge of the Eucharist. What is the food that we need? The food is Jesus Christ. The Eucharist is the sacramental expression of this food. The Eucharist is our union with the Lord, loving us even to dying on the cross. Truly, the Eucharist is the most significant of the many ways that we receive and eat the Bread of Life. The Holy Eucharist that we receive is food for our souls, giving us a share in God's life.