

Homily for the 18th Sunday in Ordinary Time

August 4-5, 2018

Readings: Exodus 16:2-4, 12-15; Ephesians 4:17, 20-24; John 6:24-35

Preacher: Nancy DeRycke

Have you ever had a craving—when you're hungry for something, but aren't sure what will satisfy? That hunger or craving is what our readings are about. I wonder what those Israelites would say to us if they were here today... Maybe:

"You might think we were ungrateful, complaining about being hungry, wanting to go back to Egyptian slavery for more food, comfort, security. Well, giving up our old way of living and trusting in Moses and God wasn't easy. Is it for YOU? You might want security, too—money in the bank, job security, a good home, trustworthy leaders. You might even be complaining about something in your own life now—a family member, the church, our country or world situation, a problem at work, your health, anything that's driving you crazy and making you want to give up. It's hard to hear people say that God will provide. Especially when we can't see beyond our immediate problems that seem to overwhelm us.

"The manna we got didn't even look like bread (manna, literally translated is, 'What is It?') and we only got enough for each day—no insurance policy on believing in God's providence. Maybe you and I get caught in our own deserts or slavery (to our independence, the latest health scare or craze, complaining about our church or our political leaders. And we look for answers or something to make it all better.

"It seems Jesus is saying to you today what Moses tried to say to us back then: 'Do not work for food that perishes, but for what endures.'"

Well folks, in this day and age in our lives, Jesus entices us with a better deal—far more satisfying food. We know that the thrill of a free loaf or quick fix to the challenges of our own life or our world is fleeting. And if we look for clear signs that we are on the right track or that life will be easy or always make sense, then we're doomed to failure.

What really endures is a belief that God is always there, walking with us—not taking away burdens or problems, but going through them with us. What really

endures is the life God gave us, our chance to make a difference. What really endures is a commitment to give life everything we've got, knowing that that's how Jesus lived. What really endures is a spirit of generosity and gratitude that makes it possible for us to give and receive and share—even when life is challenging.

What really endures is a craving for something that can never be found in our refrigerator or bank account or politics—only Jesus in the real Bread of Life. A craving to, paraphrase the words of Francis of Assisi:

*Work like everything depends on you
And pray like everything depends on God.*

Are you and I going to just keep complaining and waiting for someone else to make things better *or* are you and I going to try to do something to make a difference and live our faith? It may be the only way to satisfy our cravings.