

**Gospel Reflection on John 6:24-35**  
**18<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time Year B – 2<sup>nd</sup> August 15'**

Jesus says to us today: *you are not looking for me because you have seen the signs but because you had all the bread you wanted to eat. Do not work for food that cannot last, but work for food that endures to eternal life....* Just as we have seen over the past weeks the whole theme of food, nourishment and hunger continues in today's Gospel along with the invitation to see through the *signs* and into the depths of our experience and what nourishes our souls. Jesus is saying that when you receive the *food I am giving you* it will nourish your hunger like nothing you have ever experienced before.

We are often too quick to look for this *food* in things outside of ourselves without noticing how we are nourished deeply from within. Pope Francis in *Laudato Si* says to us in light of this modern technological age in which we live: *In the concrete situation confronting us, there are a number of symptoms (signs) which point to what is wrong, such as environmental degradation, anxiety, a loss of the purpose of life and of community living. Once more we see that "realities are more important than ideas."* No. 110. Further he goes on to say: *Modern anthropocentrism has paradoxically ended up prizing technical thought over reality, since "the technological mind sees nature as an insensate order, as a cold body of facts, as a mere 'given', as an object of utility, as raw material to be hammered into useful shape; it views the cosmos similarly as a mere 'space' into which objects can be thrown with complete indifference." The intrinsic dignity of the world is thus compromised. When human beings fail to find their true place in this world, they misunderstand themselves and end up acting against themselves.* No 115. Surely we know the truth of these words as they quake our hearts to awaken. And surely we know too that all of this is doing anything but nourishing our souls.

The people ask Jesus: *What sign will you give to show us that we should believe in you?* When we look at our world in much of its current state we must know that the majority of us seem to be placing our belief in something that seems to be sucking the very life out of us, and is in fact, slowly destroying us. The *sign* surely is to look at the *reality* around us. Think of the way technology and consumerism advances daily. Every day there seems to be a hunger for more *ideas*, bigger projects, more things to possess while at the same time the poor become poorer, our depressive tendencies become deeper, our Earths groans deepen under the strain of our consumerism and our abuses of her, our addictions gather momentum, and anger and discontent continue to increase and explode around us.... Are not these *realities* crying out to us today? Our apathy, greed and self-centredness must die to Love if we are to truly Live. Are we open to reclaim our *intrinsic dignity*?

What we are currently placing our *belief* in seems to be working against us. Those who know and listen to these *realities* and then listen to the *Reality* of Love living within, know something of the power of Love and its ability to truly transform each of us and ultimately transform our world. Can we truly say we are open to Love as the transforming force to nourish our *compromised* world? Or are we too busy looking for the next thing and the next thing to relieve our pain and suffering while blindly closing our Hearts to the real *nourishment* being offered to us? Jesus says to each of us today: *work for food that endures for eternal life.* Can we honestly say that this is what we are doing and where we are placing our energies and our hope?

Raimon Panikkar in his book *The Rhythm of Being* says: *What our contemporaries most lack is hope. Everybody has faith – in one thing or another. Love, of all sorts, is also present everywhere. We believe in so many ideas and love so many things, but our culture has little hope. Most people drag their feet along without much enthusiasm and need a variety of stimuli to go on living with a certain joy. Existence, for many has become boring, when not a burden. Here we need to dispel a misunderstanding: hope is not of the future. Hope should not be confused with a certain optimism about the future which only betrays a pessimism about the present. Hope is not the expectation of a bright tomorrow. **Hope is of the invisible.*** Page 10. Have we become so caught by our *visible* world that we have forgotten where or how to access or open into the

*invisible* Mystery all around us and within us? Have we lost *hope* or are we filled with *hope* and live accordingly?

Do we know ourselves as truly nourished by Love in a way that speaks to us of something so profoundly beautiful, mysterious and fulfilling, that we come to know in Faith that this Love we experience could never die – that what we experience and are nourished by is a taste of *eternity* living now? Do we taste and receive this *food* Jesus offers us today? Is this our experience? We must ask ourselves repeatedly what it is that we believe in. When we open into tasting the nourishment Love offers us in all its various forms and complexities we will come to know what Jesus means when he says: *do not work for food that that cannot last*. Here we will have discovered the *pearl of great price and will sell everything to acquire the pearl*. The *pearl* is Love and when we discover it, Love will become our motivation in everything we do. Even in the times when we may forget this truth, this Spirit of Love will keep nourishing us to awaken. We never stop being fed and nourished by Love. Panikkar leaves us with these few words to ponder written by Carles Riba - poet:

*You've got to play the game for keeps, all or nothing: If you won't die for love, love won't lend you its wings. To die for Love now is to Live now – it is our Eternal nourishment now– it is our deepest Hope.*

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