

**W**e meet the Israelites grumbling, as we do sometimes. There is struggle and trouble in life, there are broken promises; painful moments; there is death and loss; things do not always go as we had planned or hoped.

The journey of life, like the journey of the Israelites is wrought with dangers and difficulties. In their struggles the Israelites lost their vision, their dream; they found themselves living only for the moment, only for themselves, only for today. They wanted to go backward and not forward. For them, slavery became better than hunger! They lost sight of God.

Conversion happened for them, though, because in some way they began to see: In their loss, they had gained much; in their struggle, what they needed was right under their feet! The gifts of God were all around them, they had simply forgotten to look! *In their fear they clenched their fist! In their conversion they opened their hands!*

The struggle was not taken away, the journey still had to be made. The questions remained and faith and hope were still required; but now they saw beyond themselves! And in so seeing they put on the new self!

Today's Gospel finds Jesus sought after by crowds for what they think he will do for them in the wilderness of their life. Looking for a miracle, maybe an entertainer, someone to tell them what they want to hear, or make them "feel good." What they wanted was "comfort food," or "fast food" that requires little of them.

The questions asked of Jesus are the same questions asked today: "*When did you come here?*"--"*What are you doing here?*" "*What must we do?*" or "*What is the least we must do to get by?*" "*What signs will you give us?*" *Why did you lead us out here?* The answers he gives are not what is expected: You want food for the moment; you want certainty and proof--you want answers and signs. You want everything just the way you want it, with little or no sacrifice.

You do not know what you really want—or what you really need! The same desires the Israelites had!

What I give you, Jesus says, is not food for the moment, but food and drink for eternal life: You must live beyond the moment and love beyond your own selves, and ways! Your way is the way of faith--which you must never forget to nurture, even in moments of doubt! **FAITH IS YOUR WORK!** *Faith* in the midst of loss and suffering and in the midst of plenty and joy; *Faith* in the face of death, and in the fullness of life; *Faith* in the midst of questions and doubts and fear. *Faith* in every moment and circumstance. *Faith* that immerses you into the reality of the world and living. Faith that is neither cheap nor easy. Faith that requires loyalty, and commitment. Faith that requires being present and being seen. For us it is to be a faith centered in the person of Christ, the one who is flesh of our flesh the one who lived, laughed, suffered, died and rose up. The one who brings **MEANING** to all of life, all of its mystery and questions, all of its hope and joy! This is the "*new self*" we are to put on after we take off the delusions of our time!



The sign Jesus gives is the Table at which we find the *“the bread that the Lord gives us to eat”* which gives life to the world: not momentary satisfaction but food for the journey, the vision, eternal life. Food and drink to nourish us to see beyond ourselves and our own needs and ways. The bread and wine which is Jesus himself—food and drink to nourish faith. It is a table to which we are invited and at which we must be present if faith is to be nurtured. There are all kinds of reasons not to believe, not to present; all kinds of tensions and needs to keep us away; the world challenges faith—corruption and delusions become the order of the day. “Grumbling” of every sort all around!

But it is only at the Table of the Lord that we are fed for life beyond life. Only at the Table, in the Breaking of the Bread and the Sharing of the Cup, do we learn how to live *as* Christ and how to live *with* Christ. Only at the Table in the bread broken and shared; and the cup poured out and given, do we “rehearse” the tasks of justice and merciful care for others, learning how to become true neighbors to the oppressed and forgotten. Only at this Table do we “practice” how to live with and for each other and how to continue the journey in good times and in bad, in sickness and in health. At the Lord’s Table the corruption and delusions of the world and the church are challenged and replaced with hope.

It is a community of disciples who gather around this holy Table not to “get something,” but to “*put away the former ways of corruption and delusion*” and “*put on the new way of Christ*” again and again. At this Table is our past, our present and our future; our life, our faith, our hope: FOOD AND DRINK FOR THE JOURNEY!

To look and see this “manna” is to work at taking nothing for granted; to treasure each moment, each person, each day; each place; to appreciate, to love, to forgive and be grateful. Here we find reason to cease our grumbling because from this Table we can see the needs of all, here we share their grief and pain, joy and hope; from “the Table” we are sent to walk with one another on the journey of life

At that holy place we “attend to God.” .... We come to the feast, with open hands, making a throne for the risen Christ. Daring to receive—*not to take but to receive*—and then hold gently the worn, broken, wounded body of Christ found in every part of this world and Church, still today; but letting rest in our hands and heart as well life raised up, holding the Christ of God: Christ GIVING the mission to love, forgive, belong, to heal and to serve; Christ feeding us to be together the holy communion resting in our hands: to “become what we eat.”

Taking gently the cup of blessing to our lips—every single person without exception, we drink of his holy blood, still being poured out in the life and struggles of “the many” but filling us with his own life-blood to move through our common heart and the heart of all humanity with the flowing warmth of mercy, forgiveness, compassion and joy. We become what we drink.

So, “stretch out your hands, sisters and brothers, and keep them open: “Cease your grumbling!” Receive the manna of new times, the bread and wine served at the table of the Blessed Trinity—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—where there is a place for you and for “the many!” Eat, drink and give life and hope to the world then you will never be hungry or thirsty again!



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