

# Homily For Tuesday of the 6th Week of Ordinary Time- Year 1

## St Peter's 8:30am Mass - February 16, 2021

**Genesis 6:5-8, 7:1-5,10** "The Lord saw the wickedness of humanity and that every inclination was evil."

**Psalms 29:1-10** "The Lord sits enthroned over the flood, as king forever."

**Mark 8:14-21** "Why are you talking about having no bread? How many baskets did you collect?"

### Bread and Water

#### Introduction

If we were to read about images of bread and wine in the passages of Sacred Scripture, it would probably remind us of the Eucharist, Jesus' abiding presence with his people. However, it is easier than we think to fall into forgetfulness and lack of understanding, something like the disciples in the boat with Jesus.

Of the various ways we might explain the purpose of the Lent, which begin tomorrow, it would be well for us to think of it as 40 days of remembering and discerning, sharpening our understanding and our eyes and our ears so that we can perceive the presence of God, and softening our hearts so that we can receive that presence with full openness.

We don't have bread and wine in today's readings but we do have bread and water - the water of the flood from the book of Genesis, and a significant discussion about bread between Jesus and his disciples.

#### Bread

It seems that the disciples either did not know where Jesus was going to take them in the boat, or how long they would be gone. Otherwise, it makes no sense that they could forget to bring food for a journey, even if we take the attitude that they aren't the brightest of bulbs.

They realize they have forgotten bread. Don't forget that word 'forgotten'. But then Mark tells us they only had one loaf. That's even more confusing. They had

one loaf but forgot to bring more? Then Jesus asks: Why do you discuss that there is no bread? So, do they have one loaf or none?

We would be able to understand their embarrassment if we consider that the bread they forgot was not from their kitchen pantry at home. It was the seven baskets of miraculous bread left over from feeding four thousand from which they had just come. Imagine taking time to reflect on what they had just seen and realizing they forgot the evidence of the miracle of abundance.

But even that shows a worldly way of thinking. It was amazing as a show of control over natural things like bread. But Jesus is asking his disciples - and here we need to put ourselves in the boat with them - Jesus is asking his disciples to understand the very same thing that Mark is taking extra pains to point out. There is one loaf of bread in the boat.

What is that one loaf of bread? It is the bread of life, Jesus himself. And, even if they don't yet know about the Eucharist, the frustration of Jesus is that their understanding of the meaning of the miracle of bread is weak. Jesus is the source of the bread and they are missing the point by thinking of it as a miracle in a natural sense rather than a supernatural sense. He can take food from the physical world and multiply it, but he can also transform it into spiritual food. How will they ever understand the New Covenant in his body and blood if they don't understand that they can trust him to feed them with ordinary bread?

## **Water**

If we think Jesus was frustrated at a kind of spiritual denseness in the disciples, in the time of Noah, the Lord saw the wickedness of the people, their corruption and violence. It says he was not just sorry he had made them, but it "grieved him to his heart" it says in the text. This is not about God's emotional state, as if it goes up and down with how we behave. No, this is the frustration of God's plan of salvation for all of humanity.

What we are to see is the dominance of wickedness. This is not just the lack of understanding of the disciples. It is an absolute rejection of what is good and true and holy.

The flood is a powerful sign that evil itself will one day be destroyed. In the present, we know that Jesus, through his suffering and death, has already shown the path through the heart of evil, including the corruption of our present time.

I often find myself hesitating to tell parents that the water with which their child will be baptized is not just about cleansing (which it is) and becoming a beloved child of God (which it is). It is also, as St. Paul describes it, a dying with Christ in order to make possible a rising to new life with Christ in his resurrection. As with the flood, the water of baptism is a sign of death to an old life.

### **The Call To Lenten Renewal**

Bread and water. Water and bread. Baptism and Eucharist. Regeneration and new life in Christ. Bread of life. True food indeed.

The disciples don't yet see Jesus himself as the bread of life. So our question this Lent is: Do I recognize Jesus? Do I treasure his presence, his true presence? Will we confront the hardness of our own hearts and the darkness of our own understanding about who Jesus is? Will we let it transform the way we think and live?

A song called Bread and Water tells of a homeless man going into a shelter and declaring: I'm hungry and dirty and so ashamed and I need some bread and water. A kind woman there befriends him, reads him the Word of God and tells him: Bread and water is all you need. If you ain't too proud to pray and get down on your knees.

I can't think of anything better as a theme for our Lenten journey. Shall we let go of our pride, take up our understanding of who Jesus is, and ask to be washed clean and to be fed on the Bread of Life? Shall we get down on our knees today?

## **Key Scripture Passages**

**Entrance Antiphon:** *You are just, O Lord, and your judgment is right. Treat your servant in accord with your merciful love.*

**Genesis:** *The Lord saw the wickedness of humanity and that every inclination of their hearts was only evil. And the Lord was sorry that he had made human beings and it grieved him to his heart. So the Lord said: I will blot out from the earth the human beings I have created, people and animals. But Noah found favour in the sight of the Lord: I have seen that you alone are righteous. Take with you seven pairs of all clean animals and a pair of the animals that are not clean. For in seven days I will send rain on the earth for forty days and forty nights. And after seven days the waters of the flood came on the earth.*

**Psalms:** *In his temple all say, Glory! The Lord sits enthroned over the flood, as king forever.*

**Mark:** *After feeding the crowd, Jesus got into the boat with the disciples to return to the other side of the lake. Now the disciples had forgotten to bring bread and had only one loaf. Jesus cautioned them: Beware of the yeast of the Pharisees and of Herod. They said to one another, it is because we have no bread. Jesus said to them: Why are you talking about having no bread? Do you still not understand? Are your hearts hardened. When I broke the five loaves for five thousand, how many baskets did you collect? They said: Twelve. And the seven for the four thousand? They said: Seven. Jesus said: Do you not yet understand?*