

I AM THE BREAD OF LIFE

As we continue our reading of Chapter 6 of John's Gospel, Jesus has now crossed the Sea of Galilee to Capernaum. The crowds have followed and Jesus begins a dialogue with them.

The dialogue is a typical feature of John's Gospel. It is the way that John's Gospel seeks to explore the deeper meaning behind the miracle of the loaves and the fish.

The context remains the Jewish feast of the Passover and the essential background to understand this scene is the story from chapter 16 of the Book of Exodus that we heard as our 1st reading.

During their journey through the wilderness, God provided food for the people in the form of "manna" that gathered on the ground like dew. The people collected the fine flakes to make bread and called the manna, bread from heaven.

Jesus reminded the crowd that it was not Moses but God who provided the bread. He then makes a solemn statement that sets the scene for the exchange that follows: "it was not Moses...it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven."

The crowd demand another miracle, "Sir, give us this bread always" – they are still thinking that this is about ordinary bread.

Jesus replies "I am the bread of life". Jesus himself is the gift of the Father for the life of the world. Now we begin to understand that the feeding of the crowds with the loaves and fish was not just about feeding the hungry.

In John's Gospel there are a series of "I am" statements that are part of the ongoing dialogue between Jesus and the people: I am the Good Shepherd/the Resurrection and the Life/the Way, the Truth and the Life/the True Vine.

These various "I am" statements explore in different ways how Jesus meets our needs and how he fulfils our deepest longing – to share in the very life of God.

We will continue to explore how Jesus, the Bread of Life, is inviting us to become one with him.

Whenever we gather to celebrate the Eucharist, we are already sharing in the life of God.

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