

THE BREAD OF LIFE

This Sunday our Gospel reading takes up Chapter 6 of John's Gospel and we will continue reading from this section of John's Gospel for the next four Sundays. The chapter is often called the ***Bread of Life Discourse*** and as we will hear next Sunday, Jesus declares "I am the Bread of Life".

When we hear those words, we often immediately think of the Eucharist and receiving the Body of Christ in Holy Communion. But as we will also hear in the coming weeks, this part of John's Gospel is an invitation to explore more deeply what it means for us to share in the Bread of Life.

The chapter begins with John's account of the miracle of the loaves and fish. The miracle is followed by a discourse which is full of allusions to the Passover. In fact, John gives us an important clue when in the opening verses he writes, "It was shortly before the Jewish feast of the Passover."

To understand John's Gospel we need to recall that each year the feast of the Passover celebrated the liberation of the people of Israel from slavery in Egypt. The journey began with the killing of the Passover Lamb and then as Moses led the people into the wilderness they were sustained on their journey with manna from heaven.

The Passover feast is also the context of the opening scene of John's Gospel when John the Baptist sees Jesus approaching and declares "Behold the Lamb of God."

At the end of John's Gospel, the Last Supper and the death of Jesus on the cross happen at the time of the Passover. In fact, John gives a very particular focus to the death of Jesus by placing the crucifixion of Jesus on the preparation day for the Passover. Jesus dies on the cross at the time when the lambs are being slaughtered for the Passover meal that will take place that evening.

Over the coming weeks we will explore how Jesus leads the people to a deeper understanding of their own needs. We too are called to look beyond our immediate needs and to discover what God is offering us whenever we are called to share the Bread of Life.

Fr Paul Crowley