

Bread of life is for sharing

20th Sunday in Ordinary Time (Aug. 17): (R3) John 6:51-58; (R1) Proverbs 9:1-6; (R2) Ephesians 5:15-20.

The first electric toaster appeared in 1909. It toasted one side at a time. When the toast was done, you had to pull the plug. The first automatic electric toaster was designed in 1919 by a man sick and tired of burned toast. Americans were skeptical at first about investing in a single-function appliance, but prices dropped and sales mushroomed. From 1922 to 1930 sales tripled, thanks in part to the introduction of sliced bread by Wonder. Some people thought that pre-sliced bread was about the neatest thing they had ever heard of — so the phrase, "That's the greatest thing since sliced bread."

Sunday's Gospel is about bread. Jesus said, "I am the living bread come down from heaven. If anyone eats this bread he shall live forever." John devotes the entire sixth chapter of his Gospel to this one theme: Christ is the bread of life. He is nourishment for our hungry souls.

Note, first of all, that the bread of Christ is universal. No one is excluded. Jesus said, "If anyone eats this bread, he will live forever." There is no restriction on the kind of person Christ invites to his table.

A second characteristic of the bread of Christ is that it is intensely personal. Christ welcomes all to his table. We are all precious to him. Christ never forgets any of us. His love is universal and extremely personal. He is bread for a hungry world, bread for your life and mine.

The bread of Christ is not only universal and personal, it is also communal. It is the bread of God's people. Our faith is not to be lived in



Father Albert Shamon

A word for Sunday

isolation. It is not a faith for loners. We are community.

The bread of Christ is both time-sensitive and eternal. Scholars tell us that when Jesus told us to pray in the Lord's Prayer for "daily" bread, he used a word that is unique in all Greek literature. That word is not found in classical Greek, and nowhere else in the New Testament. Some people thought St. Matthew had made up the word when he wrote his Gospel. But in 1947 when the Dead Sea Scrolls were unearthed, among all the shards of pottery and scraps of papyrus and parchment was a shopping list — a housewife's notes of what she needed from the market. Jesus' word for "daily" was on the list. It was the designation of a category, the items she needed to purchase every day. Bread before the time of preservatives needed to be baked daily. In arid or damp climates it could grow moldy in a day. Thus Jesus says to us that we need to depend daily on him.

Finally, the bread of Christ is to be kept and to be given away.

Psychologist Robert B. Cialdini once told about a German soldier during World War I whose job was to capture enemy soldiers for interrogation. Because of the nature of

trench warfare at that time, it was extremely difficult for armies to cross the no man's land between opposing front lines; but easier for a single soldier to crawl across and slip into an enemy trench position. This particular German expert had successfully completed such a mission. He surprised a lone enemy soldier in his trench. The unsuspecting soldier, who had been eating at the time, was easily disarmed. The frightened captive gave his enemy some bread. So affected was the German by this gift that he turned from his benefactor and went back empty-handed.

The bread of Christ is not to be hoarded. It is to be shared with the world — to be kept, yet given away.

Father Shamon is administrator of St. Isaac Jogues Chapel, Fleming.

Daily Readings

Monday, August 18

Judges 2:11-19;
Psalms 106:34-37, 39-40, 43-44;
Matthew 19:16-22

Tuesday, August 19

Judges 6:11-24A, Psalms 85:9,
11-14, Matthew 19:23-30

Wednesday, August 20

Judges 9:6-15, Psalms 21:2-7,
Matthew 20:1-16

Thursday, August 21

Judges 11:29-39A,
Psalms 40:7-10,
Matthew 22:1-14

Friday, August 22

Ruth 1:1, 3-6, 14B-16, 22, Psalms
146:5-10, Matthew 22:34-40

Saturday, August 23

Ruth 2:1-3, 8-11, 4:13-17, Psalms
128:1-5, Matthew 23:1-12

MISSION NEWS



"The help received from the Propagation of the Faith is literally our 'lifeline,'" says one seminary rector in India. Although the seminarians grow most of their own food and their parents are able to offer some financial assistance, these students would not be able to prepare to serve their

people as priests without help offered through the Propagation of the Faith. "Daily the seminarians pray for the great sacrifices made for them," says another rector in that country. "We continue to ask God to bless you and the important contribution you make toward the Church in India."

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