

HOMILY SUNDAY 18 – A* (Homily 02)

“Longing for More”

(Isaiah 55:1-3; Psalm 145; Romans 8:35, 37-39; Mt 14:13-21)

“Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you that have no money, come, buy and eat!”

Those words would have been appreciated by a famous, young Jewish girl, Anne Frank, while hiding from the Nazis during the war. They would have addressed these emotions that she shared in her diary:

“Today the sun is shining, the sky is a deep blue, there is a lovely breeze and I am longing – so longing – for everything. To talk, for freedom, for friends, to be alone. And I do so long ... to cry! I feel as if I am going to burst, and I know it would get better with crying; but I can’t. I’m restless, I go from room to room, breathe through the crack of a closed window, feel my heart beating, as if it was saying, ‘Can’t you satisfy my longing at last?’ I believe that it is spring within me; I feel that spring is awakening. I feel it in my whole body and soul. It is an effort to behave normally, I feel utterly confused. I don’t know what to read, what to write, what to do, I only know that I am longing.” (Diary of Anne Frank)

Today, we are encouraged to put our complete trust in Jesus as the Bread of Life, as the only one who can satisfy our deepest hungers.

John Pridmore, a Catholic Evangelist, is a modern day Anne Frank. His parents separated when he was a child. His mother underwent a nervous breakdown; his father, a policeman, never showed any affection or love. When his stepmother started to beat him, he decided that he would never trust in love. He turned to fighting and crime such as massive drug deals, protection rackets and extreme violence. He became a powerful gang leader in London’s East end. Finally he had it all, power, wealth, fame, BMW sports cars, girlfriends and the fearful respect of others. However, there was an emptiness within that he could not understand nor figure out. He was, in the words of Isaiah, “spending his money on what was not bread, and laboring for what did not satisfy.” After almost killing a man just to impress a crime boss, his conscience finally broke through. He fell on his knees and prayed for help, and felt God’s presence. Through an accidental encounter with a priest and a retreat movement in England at the time, he met the Lord, made a two hour confession, turned his life around, and fell in love with the Church. His spiritual hunger was finally satisfied through a personal relationship with Jesus

Christ and involvement with the Church. He now travels the world speaking to youth as a motivational speaker.

The readings today tap into that human condition of longing for more, and provides us with the answer. Isaiah invites us to come to the Lord, who alone can satisfy our deepest desires. He gently suggests that it is God's Word that will reach the depths of the human heart, hearts like that of John Pridmore. Isaiah adds that the goal of life is to live within a covenant relationship of love with God.

There is a legend that before we are born, we are hugged and kissed by God, and that the underlying urge of our lives is to return to that primordial kiss of God. That is the source of that deep longing for more within us, and reveals the role of real religion, to put us in contact with God who loved us first, rather than be seduced by the false gods of possessions, fame or power that claim our attention every day.

In the Gospel, the familiar story of the multiplication of the loaves reminds us that Jesus is the Bread of Life. There is irony in that story. The disciples want to send the people away to get food elsewhere. They don't get the meaning of the miracle. They are with the Bread of Life – there is no need to go anywhere else, even when we have meager resources. In fact, our resources are never enough, and that is okay, because Jesus is all we truly need, and he is with us.

St. Paul, in the second reading, puts it all into one sentence. The core reality and foundation of our lives, for him and in his experience, is the love of the Father in Jesus Christ. Nothing can separate us from that love. All we have to do is believe in that love, put our complete trust in Jesus who put flesh to that love, and live it out in our lives.

St. Paul himself is a great example of one who put his complete faith and trust in Jesus as the incarnation of God's love for us, and who lived out of that sense of being loved unconditionally every day of his life. He walked the talk, and lived the words that he shares with us in the second reading today.

Jean Vanier, son of the former Governor General of Canada, is another person who knew the Father's love through Jesus Christ in his life. That love came to him first from his parents, who were faith-filled, holy and loving people. His father attended daily mass whenever possible, even as Governor-General. Jean also soaked up God's love in Jesus through the Scriptures, and has lived out of that sense of being loved by sharing that love with others, and teaching them how to grow in love especially through his writings.

Here is a quote from his recent book, *Eruption to Love*: “A child, born into a deeply united family, discovers his own value through the loving presence of his parents. He gains confidence in himself, discovering that he is a unique human being, infinitely precious, because his parents treated him that way. He knows that everything he does, good or bad, touches the heart of his mother. If he does something good, she is happy and laughs; if he does something bad, she is unhappy. Whatever he does provokes profound emotion in the hearts of those who love him. The child is not treated as an indifferent human being.” (p. 26)

Jean Vanier and his parents experienced God’s love above all in the Eucharist. It is in the Eucharist that we also can experience the love of the Father coming to us through Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit, in Word and Sacrament.

The Eucharist is based on the four actions of Jesus in the Gospel today. Jesus took bread, blessed it, broke it and gave it out to all in need. We who believe are also taken, blessed, broken and meant to be bread for the world.

So as we celebrate this 18th Sunday of Ordinary time, let us put our complete faith and trust in Jesus, the Bread of Life, soak up his love, and live the Eucharist in our lives through loving actions like St. Paul and Jean Vanier.