

Sunday, August 1, 2021 – Tenth Sunday after Pentecost

First Reading - Exodus 16: 2-4, 9-15

A food crisis becomes a faith crisis.

It would be interesting to count how many times it is written that "the whole congregation of the Israelites complained."

The first time they are described as complaining is in Exodus 15: 24 – just three days after the crossing of the Red Sea. They came to Marah, where they could not drink the water because it was bitter.

It would also be interesting to compare how often they complained vs. how often they gave thanks.

How often do you complain vs. how often do you give thanks?

Because of all the ways in which God has blessed us, shouldn't we give thanks at least as often as we complain?

Verses 2-3 - The whole congregation complained against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness and said, "If only we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the fleshpots and ate our fill of bread; for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger."

How often in complaining do we idealize the past, question the goodness of God, and impugn the motives of others?

Verses 4-5 - The LORD said to Moses, "I am going to rain bread from heaven. Each day the people shall go out and gather enough for that day. In that way I will test them, whether they will follow my instruction or not."

The people had to learn to trust and obey. Each day they could only gather enough for one day, and on the sixth day they had to gather enough for two days.

Verse 20 – But they did not listen to Moses; some left part of it until morning, and it bred worms and became foul.

Verse 27 – On the seventh day some of the people went out to gather, and they found none.

I wonder if one of the reasons why the Israelites were ready to enter and conquer the Promised Land after forty years in the wilderness is because they had learned to trust and obey God.

Psalm - Psalm 78: 23-29

Verses 23-24 - So God commanded the clouds above and opened the doors of heaven, raining down manna upon them to eat and giving them grain from heaven.

Second Reading - Ephesians 4: 1-24

Verse 1 – I, therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called.

Verses 2-3 - With patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Our job is not to create the unity. Rather our job is to maintain the unity. Our job is to not undo what God has done.

The unity is a God-given reality.

Verses 4-6 - There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.

There are four places in the Bible that speak of different spiritual gifts – Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12, Ephesians 4, 1 Peter 4.

Usually a conquering king would receive gifts. But here Jesus is the one who gave gifts.

Verses 7-8 - Each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore it is said, "When he ascended on high he made captivity itself a captive; he gave gifts to his people."

Verses 11-12 - The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ.

Verse 14-16 - We must no longer be children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine, by people's trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming. But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love.

Verses 22-24 - Put away your former way of life, your old self, corrupt and deluded by its lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your minds. Clothe yourselves with the new self, created according to the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

Gospel - John 6: 24-35

All four Gospels tell about the feeding of the five thousand, but only John includes the lengthy, subsequent discourse where Jesus talks about Himself as the bread of life.

John 6 includes one of the "I am" passages in the Gospel of John.

A section of this "I am" discourse will be the Gospel lesson for each of the next four Sundays.

Verses 24-25 - When the crowd saw that neither Jesus nor his disciples were (beside the sea,) they themselves got into the boats and went to Capernaum looking for Jesus. When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, "Rabbi, when did you come here?"

Verses 26-27 - Jesus answered them, "Very truly, I tell you, you are looking for me because you ate your fill of the loaves. Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you."

Verses 28-29 - They said to him, "What must we do to perform the works of God?" Jesus answered them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent."

Verses 30-33 - They said to him, "Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness." Jesus said to them, "It was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but my Father."

Verses 34-35 - They said to him, "Sir, give us this bread always." Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty."