

That gospel passage follows on from last week's account of the feeding of the 5000 people with 5 loaves and 2 fish – at the end of last week's gospel, the people are so amazed by what Jesus has done that they want to make him their king, but Jesus manages to escape from them – this is not what he has come to do, take over an earthly throne. So now they are all looking for him.

As I say, they are amazed, they want more – Jesus is the “latest celebrity”.

The people are impressed, but they have not understood what's going on.

They have not understood, that here is the Son of God, the divine messiah.

He says to them “Do not work for food that cannot last, but work for the food which endures to eternal life, the food that the Son of Man is offering you.”

So here we're not talking about ordinary bread, but something else, something that lasts, something that will sustain our souls for eternal life.

They must believe in the one God has sent. In other words, believe in me, he says.

So then they challenge him – give us another sign then, like Moses did. WE hear about this in the first reading today.

When God's people were hungry in the desert they complained to Moses, and God sent them the manna, the food that kept them going for forty years. Each morning, it would be there. It came with the morning dew – when the dew lifted, there it was on the ground, as fine as hoar frost. The people said to one another “What is that? And Moses said “That is the bread that the Lord has given you to eat. It was a miracle, it wasn't a natural substance, but it was also temporary, it only lasted for the forty years during which the people were wandering in the desert on the way to the promised land. Once they got there, the manna ceased. Jesus is going to give God's people a more lasting bread, and so he says “I am the bread of life; he who comes to me shall not hunger” So the manna is a foretaste, a prefiguring or a type of the true bread from heaven. Our Eucharistic Prayer hints at this when it says in the epiclesis, the calling down of the Spirit upon the bread and wine “Send your Holy Spirit upon them like the dewfall that they may become for us the Body and Blood of Christ.”

The manna came with the dewfall, so the Holy Spirit, coming down like the dewfall changes the bread and wine into the body and blood of the Lord.

The people in the gospel have no idea about this of course – but they want this bread, and they have

misunderstood what he is talking about - how could they have understood. They think he means another meal, or a daily supply of miraculous bread to fill them up; but this kind of food is the food that cannot last – we eat it, we digest it, and it's gone, and soon we need more.

What the people in the gospel missed, and what we so often miss as we are caught up in the materialistic society we live in is that God call us to search for a deeper existence, he plants in our hearts a hunger for the spiritual bread that Jesus is speaking of; in other words for the bread of life – and these spiritual hungers of the heart and soul can be satisfied only by him

there is a hunger for truth - in him alone is the truth of God.

there is a hunger for life - and in him alone is life more abundant.

there is a hunger for love - in him alone is the love that outlasts sin and death.

And all of these can be satisfied only by Christ the bread of life; and as Catholics, we should know, that it is Christ, the bread of life, whom we receive in the Eucharist;

we know it

some of us have been taught it from childhood – that the Eucharist is the body and blood, soul and divinity of Jesus Jesus himself said “I am the bread of life...” and later in chapter 6 of Saint John’s Gospel “He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood and drinks my blood lives in me and I live in him..”

do we really take this in

do we dare allow this teaching to penetrate our souls – do we allow its full impact to make itself felt in our lives

Because this is so wonderful, far greater than the manna from heaven - the Eucharist isn't merely a symbol, but it's miraculous, more so than the manna. If it's not a miracle, then the manna is a greater sign than the Eucharist. The foretaste can't be greater than the reality.

And the reality is that here we have God's miraculous provision of the Blessed Sacrament of his Son, Jesus. Not a symbol, not a type, but the real thing, the real presence. We receive him through whom all our hungers are satisfied. We receive him here in the most Holy Eucharist.