

18th Sunday in Ordinary Time – August 4/5, 2018 – Reflection

“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 ... This is indeed the will of my Father, that all who see the Son and believe in him may have eternal life; and I will raise them up on the last day ... for truly, I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you!”

(John 6)

Quite a while ago, I shared an apartment for a year with a young man who, I think, fancied himself quite the gourmet cook ... gourmet, that is, if you mean preparing and consuming the same exact meal every day of his life. Every evening when it was time for his dinner, Paul would thaw and fry one beef patty. With the meat he would prepare a serving of mashed potatoes - instant out of a box, of course. Ever the advocate for farm-to-table dining, Paul would pair the meat and fake potatoes with a healthy vegetable: green beans fresh out of the DelMonte's can. Oh, and every night he would make a garden salad: iceberg lettuce, tomatoes wrapped in cellophane, and maybe a bit of carrot or celery or cuke, but never any onion. Over this mixture he would slather French dressing, never Italian, never creamy peppercorn, never blue cheese; not ranch or raspberry vinaigrette ... just French!

As you can see, Paul was a master chef with a refined palette.

Well, one day, our chef deluxe took it into his mind to become a world famous baker. He would make bread from scratch. As I watched him work in our little kitchen in a dust storm of flour, Paul brought the flour that wasn't flying around the room together with water, sugar, eggs, salt, and oil and began to pound the mixture in to a blob that he called dough. Then he set the blob in a bowl, covered it with a towel, and, with a glimmer in his eye, told me to wait for the miracle when the blob, I mean, the dough would rise. So, like a little kid parked by the fireplace on Christmas Eve waiting to catch a glimpse of Santa coming down the chimney, I waited to see Paul's baking miracle. One day ... nothing ... still just a blob in a bowl. Two days ... still the blob. Three days ... Jesus rose faster than that!! Finally, on the fourth day, I took the blob that Paul had evidently forgotten about, rolled it out, covered it with cinnamon and nutmeg and sliced apples and baked it as an apple flatbread treat.

You see, Paul had forgotten one tiny ingredient that would've made all the difference: yeast. Yeast is microscopic, it's living, it devours sugars and makes bread rise, and grape juice wine, and barley and hops beer, and rye whiskey. Paul had left out the life, so he just made "Dead Bread".

What's the big deal about getting to Mass anyway? Who needs some little dry wafer that fills nobody up? Jesus has told us, "I am the way and the truth and the life ... unless you eat the Bread of Life, my flesh, you have no life in you."

My friend Paul left out the spark of life and made flat, dead bread. Jesus is the "way and the truth and the life". If we leave Jesus out of our lives; if we leave Holy Communion out of our Sunday plans; are we

raised up? Aren't we rather just blobs, flat and dead to the world to come??!!