**THEME:** THE BREAD OF LIFE
**READINGS:** Exodus 16:2-4, 12-15, 31 / Ephesians 4:17, 20-24/ John 6:24-35
18th Sunday in Ordinary Time

By Very Rev. Fr. John Louis ([http://frlouis.com](http://frlouis.com/))

To the people who looked for Jesus Christ after he had fed them, he said: “I am the Bread of life.” Often in the Bible, bread, food or a banquet is used as a figure of deliverance or salvation by God. For instance, as a sign and memorial for their deliverance from slavery in Egypt, God instructed the Israelites to have the “Passover Meal” (Ex. 12:1-48). Secondly, to strengthen them for the “journey of salvation” to the Promised Land, God gave them manna from above (Ex. 16:13-31).

Thirdly, centuries after settling in the Promised Land, the prophet Isaiah would explain to his people the joy of God’s salvation with an imagery of a sumptuous banquet: “On this mountain the Lord Almighty will prepare a feast of rich food for all peoples, a banquet of aged wine – the best of meats and the finest of wines” (Is. 25:6, NIV). Fourthly, the imagery of a free banquet was used to convey the good news of God’s deliverance of the Jews exiled in Babylon. That is, when those Jews heard of God’s invitation to eat and drink at no cost (Is. 55:1-3), they understood that the message was not so much about physical food and drinks, but the joy of returning to the Promised Land. And soon, they returned to the Promised Land.

Similarly, the feeding of the thousands by Jesus (as recorded in last Sunday’s gospel reading) was not so much about their physical satisfaction, but about spiritual salvation in Jesus Christ. Thus, when the people Jesus fed did not get the spiritual significance of the miracle, he told them: “**I tell you the truth, you are looking for me, not because you understood the miraculous signs but because you ate the loaves and had your fill. Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. … The bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world. …I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty**” (Jn. 6:26-35).

In other words, as physical food (bread) satisfies our hunger and gives us strength and joy, so **Jesus Christ is our spiritual satisfaction, strength and joy**. Moreover, Jesus gives us far more than we obtain from physical food. In the first place, whereas physical food perishes, Jesus, the Bread of Life, lives forever. Secondly, while physical food nourishes only our bodies (which are short-lived), Jesus nourishes our souls (which are eternal). Thirdly, whereas physical food is no longer useful at our death, Jesus feeds us beyond the grave!

Finally, Jesus wants us to understand and believe that nothing else (material or spiritual) can truly satisfy us and give us everlasting joy, except He Himself. With St. Augustine, therefore, let us pray: “O God, you have made us for Yourself, and our souls are restless, until they rest in You.” Amen!