

Reflection on John 6:35, 41-51

In the gospel, Jesus tells the crowds: "I am the bread of life." Jesus also says that anyone who comes to Him will never hunger, nor thirst. Did the crowds truly understand what Jesus was saying? Did they realize that Jesus was not speaking literally? Jesus was not talking about food and drink that we consume. Rather, Jesus was speaking of our "spiritual" hunger and thirst.

Ask yourself: What is it you hunger for? What do I truly thirst for? Is it love, friendship, financial stability, a healthy and happy family? We human beings have many hungers. However, we often try to satisfy our deepest hungers with money, material things, people, or even food or drink. Yes, these things do satisfy us to some extent. However, our deepest hunger is for God! We can have all the money in the world or a multitude of friends but if God, Jesus or the Spirit is not part of our lives, nothing else will ever satisfy!

The reality is: no matter how much we have or how many people we love, truly only God alone will satisfy our hunger and our longing! Today, will I choose to spend time with God?

In the Gospel the Pharisees murmuring about Jesus. They were arguing about his statement: "I am the bread come down from heaven." They looked at one another and said: "He is not from heaven. This man is Joseph's and Mary's son. How can we believe the fantastic claims he is making? Why is he saying: 'I have come down from heaven'?" And they refused to believe him.

Finally, Jesus responded to them. He bluntly told them to stop murmuring among themselves. Jesus then said to them: "No one can come to me unless my Father draws them. If they respond to my Father's call, I will raise them up on the last day." Jesus also says that if a person listens to the Father and learns from Him, they will come to Him. It is understandable why the Jews were murmuring about Jesus. He does sound a bit "out of his head."

Jesus, however, does not stop there. He then tells his listeners: "I am the bread of life. It is true that our ancestors ate manna in the desert. However, I am the living bread come down from heaven! Anyone who eats this 'bread' will never die." The people listening to Jesus were scandalized! After all, who was he to make such fantastic claims? True, he was a powerful preacher but how could he be "the bread of life?" And then Jesus goes one step further and says: "The bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world."

How would you respond if you heard a person making these claims? We automatically might categorize them as a 'nut case' or a religious fanatic. However, we never know when, how or through what individual, Jesus may come to us. After all, Jesus is the "living" bread. He has power far beyond our imagination. The reality is: he is always with us! However, we are not always aware of his presence.

Be awake and alert. Jesus, our "bread from heaven," may appear to us in strange or unusual ways. Or he may appear to us in the daily: disguised in a friend, an unexpected helping hand or in the quiet of the morning. Keep your eyes, ears, mind and heart open and alert. Don't want to miss him! What a loss that would be!