

Homily 18th Sunday Year B 2021

St Paul tells the Ephesians and us to be focused, not just on anything but on Christ. The Hebrews with Moses were focused on becoming a people with a specific identity and faith. The forty years in the desert might seem long but is not long in terms of the development of former slaves into a nation. Their focus was on God whom they trusted would lead them to this promised future and independence in their own land. Forty years seems marginal for a people to nurture integrity, understand its responsibilities, develop justice and become a welcoming, harmonious and peaceful nation. In fact, the process is ongoing, always being shaped and developed, and hopefully improving over time.

Pause there and realise that, since the 1800s, this parish has developed a family spirit along very similar lines. It has had its setbacks and successes, made mistakes, like the people of the Exodus, but has grown stronger because of them. God has certainly been the focus as has Jesus. The same Jesus who gives himself completely to us in the form of bread and wine that becomes his Body and Blood. Bread, baked in a fierce heat, speaks of pain and joy, suffering and life. St John reassures us that Jesus, who suffered and rose to glory, is the Bread of Life.

St. Augustine of Hippo said: *For surely this loaf was not made from one grain of wheat? The grains were separate before they came together to become one loaf. They were joined together by water, after first having been ground (**contritionem**—the Latin verb he uses here). For if the many kernels are not ground and are not moistened by water, they could not come to this form, that we call a loaf. . . without fire, also, there would still not be a loaf of bread.* (Sermon 227). Our family (or parish) had been formed from the lives of people joined together by the waters of baptism. Being *ground down* signifies the caring support given to others, the work of maintaining and enhancing the whole plant, the formation provided for the sacraments, the good works and charitable support generously given, the good will, the self-sacrifice of so many, down through time. Yet, from the beginning, regularly fed, energised and sustained by this one Bread we know as Jesus Christ. It is only right that we gather in the Eucharist, in thanksgiving.

By coming together, we celebrate family, we celebrate what we have become, knowing that we still need to develop and grow in new ways which Jesus will open to us. No wonder we gather to give glory to God - to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

A police car pulled up outside grandma's house and grandpa climbed out. The officer explained that the elderly gentleman said he was lost in the park. "*Why, Bill,*" said Grandma. "*You've been going there for over 30 years! How could you get lost?*" Leaning close to Grandma so the police officer couldn't hear, he whispered, "*Wasn't exactly lost. I was just too tired to walk home!!*"