

Sunday August 1, 2021
18th Sunday in Ordinary Time
Parishioner Reflection

By: Gerry Mackrell

In today's first reading we learn of the abominable conditions that the children of Israel were subjected to at the hands of their Egyptian masters. Moses, through the mighty power of God, forced the release of the people of Israel. Their plight at the hands of the Egyptians was soon forgotten though when hunger superseded freedom, God provided for their needs by supplying the ingredients for bread making and quail for meat. Being fed quelled all suggestion of returning to Egypt.

In the gospel of John, Jesus encountered a similar problem. Wherever He went a multitude followed. At one point (in Capernaum) Jesus was forced to confront them with the truth. "Very truly, I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of loaves. Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures for eternal life."

From these readings it is apparent that we are a complex unit, two persons in one. A physical body endowed with a spirit (albeit tarnished). The physical body is equipped with five senses, a remarkable and complex human being, but, without a spirit it has little or no purpose, in a relatively short period of time death will return it to dust. A sinful or fallen spirit with knowledge of good and evil cannot stand in the presence of God. This spirit without intervention and redemption also faces death. The intervention comes from God Himself in the form of His son Jesus. And redemption comes from the spirit's response to His sacrifice and teachings.

St Paul writes 'You must no longer live as the Gentiles live, in the futility of their minds.' I believe Paul is talking about our dependence solely on earthly achievement, he is urging us to think beyond the temporary. Paul goes on to say, 'You were taught to put away your former way of life, corrupt and deluded, be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and be created according to the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.' I believe here Paul is advocating the awareness of and the importance of the redemption of the spirit within.

Combining the spirit of man with physical man reveals the tremendous love God has for His lost sheep (spiritual man). Since the fallen or tarnished spirit of man cannot live in the presence of God's Glory, being combined with spiritual man here on earth provides the spirit time for reflection and redemption. The actions of physical man, guided by the spirit within, will ultimately be judged by God.

These readings emphasise the importance of the spirit over the physical body. God knowing of our earthly needs provides food for the body and food for the soul. However, He emphasises the need for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. It is on Him that God the Father sets His seal (God's seal of authenticity and authority).

These readings remind me of the parable of the prodigal son. Sins recognized and repented before God are rewarded with forgiveness and love. Sins expunged mean welcome home.