ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY (YEAR B) Sunday 11 August 2024

EXPLORING THE SUNDAY GOSPEL

COMMUNION BREAD

EXPLORING NEXT SUNDAY'S THEME

Introducing the Gospel

Bread from heaven (John 6: 35, 41-51)
The sixth chapter of John's Gospel begins with Jesus feeding the five thousand people. The feeding leads into Jesus teaching that he is the bread of life. Now this teaching about the bread of life is linked directly to the church's experience of the eucharist or communion. Jesus says, 'Whoever eats of this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.'

Our image to stimulate reflection on this passage is *communion bread*.

Core extract from the Gospel (John 6: 35, 48-51; for reflection throughout the week)

Jesus said, 'I am the bread of life.
Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died.
This is the bread that comes down from heaven,
so that one may eat of it and not die.
I am the living bread that came down from heaven.
Whoever eats of this bread will live for ever;
and the bread that I will give for the life of the world
is my flesh.'

Gospel prayer (for use throughout the week)

Lord Jesus Christ,
you feed your people
in the eucharistic feast.
Come and stand among us
when the bread is broken
and when the wine is poured,
that we may know your presence;
for you are the Bread of Life.
Amen.

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READING NEXT SUNDAY'S GOSPEL

John 6: 35, 41-51

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.

Then the Jews began to complain about him because he said, 'I am the bread that came down from heaven.' They were saying, 'Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, "I have come down from heaven"?' Jesus answered them, 'Do not complain among yourselves. No one can come to me unless drawn by the Father who sent me; and I will raise that person up on the last day. It is written in the prophets, "And they shall all be taught by God." Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me. Not that anyone has seen the Father except the one who is from God; he has seen the Father. Very truly, I tell you, whoever believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live for ever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.'

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ENGAGING WITH THE THEME

Dwelling with the text (John 6: 35, 41-51)

Begin exploring John's presentation of Jesus' teaching concerning the bread that he will give for the life of the world by employing the SIFT approach of Sensing, Intuition, Feeling, and Thinking. You may find that one of these approaches comes easier to you than the others. But it is worth trying all four.

- What details in the passage catch your attention (Sensing)?
- What big ideas in the passage spark in your mind (Intuition)?
- What most touches your heart in the passage (Feeling)?
- What most stretches your mind and makes you think in the passage (Thinking)?

Thinking and talking

Identify topics within the passage that can get you thinking and talking. Here are some ideas to get you started.

- What do you understand by Jesus saying 'I am the bread of life'?
- What do you make of Jesus saying 'I am the bread that came down from heaven'?
- What do you make of the crowd's response 'We know his father and mother'?
- What do you understand by Jesus saying 'Whoever eats the bread will live for ever'?
- What does this narrative say for us today?

Using your Bible

Explore the connections between the passage from John's Gospel and the synoptic tradition illustrated by Mark.

- Mark 6: 1-3
- Mark 14: 22-26

Explore the eucharistic tradition in Paul.

- 1 Corinthians 11: 23-26

Explore images in the Psalms.

- Psalm 104: 15

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Exploring online

Widen your exploration of John's presentation of Jesus' teaching 'I am the bread of life' by looking up some of the following themes and others of your own choosing.

- Recordings of classic eucharistic hymns
- How different denominations deal with communion bread
- Making and supplying communion bread

Drawing on experience

The image to stimulate reflection on John's presentation of Jesus' teaching concerning the bread of life is *communion bread*. Draw on your own experience of communion bread. For example:

- What is your experience of communion wafers?
- What is your experience of using fresh bread at communion services?
- Have you experienced a communion service for which the congregation has baked the bread?

What have you learned about communion bread?

Creating and making

This section offers pointers to some creative activities that may be inspired by John's presentation of Jesus' teaching concerning the bread of life or by the image of communion bread.

- Bake bread to be used for the communion service.
- Make a collage of how different denominations deal with communion bread.
- Make a display of verses about bread from eucharistic hymns.
- Create a reflection, poem, or prayer on the theme of Jesus' teaching concerning the bread of life or on the image of communion bread.

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Liverpool Cathedral

EXPLORING THE SUNDAY GOSPEL AT HOME

Each week we are inviting people in their homes to look forward to those Sunday services that follow the Revised Common Lectionary Gospel readings. We employ the SIFT approach (Sensing, Intuition, Feeling, and Thinking) to encourage reflection on the Sunday Gospel. We are suggesting a variety of ways in which people of all ages, and households working together, may engage with the Gospel reading and celebrate that engagement with shared activities.

Our invitation then is for you to share your reflections, prayers and photos of your creative work with the Cathedral by emailing them to smc.lesliefrancis@gmail.com.

These materials have been developed by the Canon Theologian of Liverpool Cathedral working in collaboration with the staff team here at the Cathedral, and with sponsorship and support from the St Mary's Centre in Wales.

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