

**Exodus 16:2-4, 12-15**

**Psalm 78**

**Ephesians 4:17, 20-24**

**John 6:24-35**

**Homilist: Deacon Mike Mocek**

**August 5, 2018**

I think it would be a safe bet that very few, if any, of us here today can relate personally to the desert narrative of our first reading from the Book of Exodus. Even our 100-degree-plus summers in north Texas pale in comparison to the conditions faced by the Israelites on their decades-long journey through the harsh wilderness with very little food or water. Granted they had been freed from slavery in Egypt, and were on their way to the promised land, but they faced severe hardships and were beginning to see that many would never make it to the promised land. They were desperately hungry and thirsty, and they wondered if they might not have been better off remaining as slaves in Egypt. Under those circumstances, who can blame them for grumbling? But in their misery and weakness the Israelites lost sight of God's attention to their needs and God's loving care for them. The Israelites' response to their predicament was to complain, and they were tempted to give up and turn back. But God heard their complaints, and God did not give up on them. God sent them bread, quail, and water to sustain them for the remainder of their journey. God instructed them to gather each day only what they needed for that day. They were not to hoard. God provided food to sustain the Israelites, but more importantly, God gave them a sign of unfailing love and care, so they might learn to place their trust in God.

Though we today may have very little in common with the ancient Israelites, certain parallels can be drawn between their

journey to the promised land and our journey of faith to God. Like the Israelites in the Sinai, we find ourselves in faith deserts from time to time. On our journeys of faith, we encounter obstacles, get distracted, and grow weary. We complain. We may even be tempted to give up and turn away from God. But as with the ancient Israelites in the desert, God hears our complaints and will never give up on us. God attends to our needs with the same love and care that sustained the Israelites with food and water in the desert. In turn, we too must place our trust in God.

The crowd in today's Gospel is also on a journey – crossing the Sea of Galilee and following Jesus to Capernaum. It is the same crowd from last week's Gospel that Jesus fed on the mountain from the five loaves and two fish given by a young boy. When the crowd found Jesus in Capernaum, he saw immediately that they missed the point of the sign he had given them in the multiplication of loaves and fish, and they were only looking for more miracles. He urged them not to seek food that merely fills their stomachs, but to strive for food that brings eternal life. When they asked what they needed to do to get that special food, Jesus answered, "believe in the one (God) sent." But that was not enough for this crowd. They wanted another sign to help them believe in him. Recalling the bread from heaven that their ancestors ate in the desert, they asked Jesus, "What can you do?" By then, Jesus was getting a little perturbed, and he prefaced his response with, "Amen, amen, I say to you." (That's the Gospel equivalent to our parents telling us, "This may hurt a little, but it is for your own good.") Then Jesus added, "...my Father gives you the true bread from heaven." .... "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will

never hunger, and whoever believes in me will never thirst.

Jesus' message to the crowd, and to us, is that we encounter the bread of life through faith, not miracles. The crowd in Capernaum was looking so hard for miracles that they missed what was right before their eyes. How often do we make the same mistake? Jesus, the bread of life, is all around us – in the Eucharist, in every other person, and in all circumstances of our daily lives. We do not need a miracle to recognize him and accept his love. We need only faith.