

## Eat, Else the Journey Will Be Too Long

**Intro.** The Olympics have given us some distraction from some of the other news. Depending on our interests, some events are more exciting to watch than others. The individual stories of the athletes can be as interesting as the events they compete in. Even those of us who don't swim, run, jump or hurl objects long distances can admire their discipline. Since several grew up or trained here, we know some of their background and drive to succeed. For most of their lives, competing at a high level seems to give them joy; *figuratively* it has been their sustenance, what feeds them. And could *literally* feed them if they can get their faces on a cereal box or name on sneakers.

**I.** These weeks we hear from a section of John's gospel often called the "Bread of Life" sermon. A couple of weeks ago we heard about the Lord literally taking bread and fish to multiply and feed thousands. Last week the crowd followed him seeking more bread. Part of what was confusing the people in the Gospel was a misunderstanding between literal and figurative food. Today the Lord attempted to get them to understand there is "food" that satisfies hunger that is different than the bread from a bakery. It is the *bread from heaven*, meaning the presence of God in their lives and ours, *and* the work his presence inspires in each of us as a result. This bread once fed upon, never leaves our hearts and souls hungry or thirsty.

**Concl.** Not all of us experience the joy that comes from running, swimming, dancing or playing music. I, personally, never got much joy from running except for chasing a soccer ball many years ago. So, what gives *us* sustenance? What is our “bread?” It could be the love we give to and receive from family and friends. It could be the satisfaction and joy we feel in our work. Or in the many opportunities to “do the will of God” in our community. We recently lost several amazing leaders who showed us how to do God’s will in Clay County by starting a free medical clinic, a soup kitchen and a food bank (Jeanne and Guy Gallina and Jack Graves). Those are some of the figurative types of bread that feed our souls. The Word of God in Scripture is also an important source

of nourishment. But there is a literal “Bread from Heaven” – the Communion we receive at Mass. It is literally the Bread of and for Life. It is the very real presence of Jesus Christ. Not being able to receive the Eucharist during this pandemic has been one of the major losses. Also not being able to celebrate Eucharist together as a parish family and the nourishment that gives. **We experience the “Bread from heaven” in different ways in our lives we can take to heart the words of the angel to Elijah, “Get up and eat, else the journey will be too long for you.” It is a long journey we are on. We need all the strength we can get.**

Fr. Michael Pendergraft

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