

Homily: 18th Sunday: Cycle B: 2024: Ex 16: 2-4, 12-15; Ps 78; Eph 4: 17, 20-24; Jn 6: 24-35

“Jesus’s Thirst for Us”

1. *“I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me will never hunger, and whoever believes in me will never thirst.”* As we continue to reflect upon John chapter 6, today Jesus is calling us to **a deep personal relationship** with Himself. All of us are searching, sometimes desperately, for ultimate meaning and purpose in our life. There are untold false paths to take to this goal: as St. Paul says today in the 2nd reading: *do not live like the non-believers live, with deceitful desires, selfish cravings and sensual lust*, but rather *“be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and put on the new self, in Christ, created in God’s way in righteousness and holiness of truth* (i.e., our Catholic Faith).” The pre-eminent way this happens for us Catholics is through receiving the **Holy Eucharist**, with faith, in the state of grace, and through the cultivation of **a deep interior life of prayer**. Do we have a personal relationship with Jesus, and so come to Mass out of a sense of love and devotion, or do we come to Mass simply out of obligation? This gets to the heart of things. The Lord thirsts for our love, but He won’t force us to do anything. He invites us; He beckons us to His heart. What is our response?
2. St. Mother Teresa’s favorite Scripture Passage and motivation for her beautiful and noble life of charity was when Jesus said on the Cross, as He was dying, **“I thirst”** (Jn 19:28). It says in the Bible that Jesus said this to fulfill all things, meaning His mission to draw all people to Himself - to do everything possible on His end to save our souls. Jesus thirsts for our response, for our love, to give our lives over to Him in total trust. This is why as I mentioned last week, the Lord is not too impressed when people get all excited about the physical miracles in the Gospel; see today in the Gospel when he says to the people looking for Him, *“Amen, amen, I say to you, you are looking for me not because you saw signs, but because you ate the loaves and were filled. Do not work for food that perishes but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For on him the Father, God, has set his seal.”* **What the Lord does get excited about**

is when people respond to His message with faith and conversion of heart and life. That is what we are all called to do today.

3. **A living relationship with God changes everything!** We put things in proper perspective. But daily it is a battle - we must constantly work at this. It's so easy to lose sight of the Lord and His narrow way, amid the daily whirlwind of family, work, social activity, various problems, sins, weaknesses, etc. However, once we make the **daily resolution** to come back to the Lord as the living fountain of our life - over time we will make progress in holiness. Cultivating a **life of prayer**, which is mostly accomplished by simply being docile to the Holy Spirit and putting in the time, is the anchor for this living relationship, along with the **Eucharist**, receiving daily if possible. **It's a tough time we are in.** As you all well know there is a lot of corruption and immorality in our society which even comes into the Church on the human level. There are quite a few fake Catholics in our time – we need to pray for their conversion. How do we deal with all this? Do we give up and say: *I am done with trying to help all these crazy ppl, or with the Church and the Faith, or think everyone seems to be doing evil, why try to be good? Or do we do, like the saints* - like St. John Vianney, the patron saint of all priests, whose feast day is August 4th and our Blessed Mother Mary and others - when we see and experience great evil: *to pray more, to be an instrument of God's grace and mercy and holiness, to show people that there is a better way, there is the path that leads to salvation and holiness, even when we face evil – God's grace and mercy is stronger.* **Many human beings let us down, but God never does; and He gives us the Saints to remind us that holiness and integrity and goodness is possible, even in our frail humanity.** *I ask you to pray in a special way for all priests and religious to grow in holiness, and for new holy vocations esp. to the priesthood in AJ; the same goes for those in the married life to strive to live that vocation with great integrity and faithfulness, to be open to life and self-giving love.* And also pray for a spiritual renewal of our Parishes and Diocese and for all ppl. The way we overcome evil is with goodness, and the goodness of God working in us never fails esp. in the Divine Gift of the Eucharist! God bless you. †