

## Finding Meaning in the Sign

August 19, 2018 – 20<sup>th</sup> Week of Ordinary Time – John 6:51-58

Theologian Bernard Cooke in his book, *Sacraments and Sacramentality*, says, “There are many definitions of the human being; one of the most recent and probably one of the most accurate is that a human is a symbol-making being.” (p.44) Cooke goes on to say that the reason we humans do this is that “People need to be saved from the apparent meaninglessness of their lives.” (p. 18) We continually search for a way to express truth in every experience of our lives.

We celebrate that first important birthday of the baby with one candle on top of the cake. The candle represents that this child has turned one year old. Hidden behind this initial symbol, is something much deeper. Without saying it, the candle represents and embodies not just this one special day but the 365 days and all the milestones that have taken place in the life of this child over the past year. We are symbol-making beings. We can't help ourselves. We put sign and symbol to our experience so that we can express the truth about, not only the joys, but the sorrows of life. We symbolize our favorite team with shirts, signs and pennants. We symbolize our love with engagement rings and wedding bands. We symbolize the U.S.A. by displaying the Stars and Stripes. Think of all the signs associated with our national experience of 9/11. A sign says more than our words or actions can ever express.

Over these past several weeks, Jesus has been teaching us about a unique sign, a sign that has a deep and abiding meaning. **“I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world.”** This sign is the core essence of our Catholic faith.

The Church teaches that the sacramental sign of Jesus' Body and Blood is God's Real Presence. This sign is above and beyond any other sign we as human beings have as it gives us hope that life has meaning eternally. Like all the sacraments, this sign of Jesus' Body and Blood has an effect on us. Our faith expresses this truth in the understanding that we become the sign that we celebrate. In baptism, we take on a new life and become the disciple of Jesus. In communion we eat his body and become Christ to the world. In all the sacraments, the grace of God brings meaning and transformation in our lives.

Our human identity is in knowing Jesus and accepting that he **“is the bread that came down from heaven.”** We participate in Jesus' passion, death and resurrection each time we gather to feed upon his Word and His Body and Blood. We are symbol-making people who embrace what Jesus says, **“Unlike your ancestors who ate and still died, whoever eats this bread will live forever.”** Jesus is the greatest sacrament (sign) we have been given or could ever express. The meaning that we find within the sign is that Jesus is God and we belong to HIM!

Blessings!

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