



41 The Jews were complaining to each other about Jesus, because he had said, 'I am the bread that came down from heaven.' 42 'Surely this is Jesus, son of Joseph,' they said. 'We know his father and mother. How can he now say, "I have come down from heaven"?''

43 Jesus said in reply, 'Stop complaining to each other. 44 No-one can come to me unless he is drawn by the Father who sent me, and I will raise him up at the last day. 45 It is written in the prophets: They will all be taught by God, and to hear the teaching of the Father, and learn from it, is to come to me. 46 Not that anybody has seen the Father, except the one who comes from God: he has seen the Father. 47 I tell you most solemnly, everybody who believes has eternal life. 48 I am the bread of life. 49 Your fathers ate the manna in the desert and they are dead; 50 but this is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that a man may eat it and not die. 51 I am the living bread which has come down from heaven. Anyone who eats this bread will live for ever; and the bread that I shall give is my flesh, for the life of the world.'

Other readings: 1 Kings 19:4-8 Psalm 33 (34) Ephesians 4:30-5:2

The discussion between Jesus and the Jews about the 'bread of life' continues. Once again his listeners are stuck with human ways of perception. They cannot accept that there is anything more to Jesus than the man who was brought up in Nazareth. What sense can they make of him 'coming down from heaven'?

Jesus challenges their quarelling and seeks to move the discussion to a deeper level. The focus of these verses is on Jesus as the one who brings true teaching. To learn from Jesus is to be fed indeed. To learn from Jesus is to come to know the Father. The stress is once again on believing in the words of the Son. These words, even in this present life, bring eternal life. Unlike the manna in the desert, the bread Jesus offers is a pledge of eternal life.

In the final verse we have the first reference to the 'flesh' of Jesus: 'the bread that I shall give is my flesh, for the life of the world'. The emphasis in this and the following verses will be on the Eucharist.

We are reminded of the self-giving of Jesus at the Last Supper and at the cross. Jesus is the Bread of Life both in his words of life, and in the sacrament of his body and blood. The reaction of his hearers is predictably one of puzzlement, as the following verses will show.

Do I really value the teaching of Jesus as revealing the Father?

Do I treasure the coming of Jesus in Word and Sacrament at Mass?

We pray that we may move beyond earthly perceptions to openness to the things of God.

We pray that the Bread of Life will truly nourish us as individuals and as community.