

18th Sunday in Ordinary Time
4.08.2024
Fr. Bill Edebohls

The journey that we take to God is not always an easy one. It is easy to get lost along the way, easy to be discouraged by the effort others expect us to make, easy to give up on the journey and the sense of commitment because we have become disenchanted by the sin and hypocrisy that too often festers in the community that shares the faith journey with us.

In today's first reading, centuries before Christ, the Israelites on their way to the Promised Land, turn against Moses. The journey had become too tough. Their difficulties and the burden of discouragement made them yearn for a previous existence - back in the land of Egypt before their journey from slavery began. They yearned for a mediocre but familiar existence. Freedom frightened them, and rather than hope in an uncertain future, they wanted to go back to the security of the past – even if that meant back to slavery and oppression – for there they at least had full bellies.

This is the temptation of every believer. This is why Jesus repeats to his disciples: “Do not be afraid”. Do not be afraid of change, of a new future, of a hope of what could be.

Fear characterizes the ‘old self’ to which St. Paul refers in the 2nd reading. The circumstances in which we live may be stormy, buffeted by all the demands, the sorrows and grief that can assail us in life; even the forces of sin and death can seem to have the upper hand, as the wicked seem to prosper and the good go down the gurgler.

In spite of all this, if we do not want to continue along the road to destruction, we can choose to accept the call to be renewed in the Spirit – continuing the journey of faith, the journey of hope, despite all discouragement. To take the risk; to launch out into the deep; into the unknown and the unfamiliar.

Even when we cannot - like the Hebrews travelling through the desert and wilderness - cannot see clearly a way forward, together we do continue the journey. A journey towards the ‘new self’ clothing ourselves in Christ, feeding on Christ our bread of life, and continuing to hope.

The works of Jesus enable us to know that God is life. And our own journey will make others know that believing in God means not being afraid and that it is necessary to continue on the journey, not alone but together, to the promise of freedom and life.

Here, the Eucharist, is our pit-stop on that journey. Here our hunger is fed. A family together, sharing joys and sorrows, hunger and plenty, to put on the ‘new self’ so that we can go from here – emptiness filled – to journey on - being the face of Christ to others – and greeting those we meet on the journey of life - and whose lives we touch day by day – with the greetings of the God who is mercy, compassion, love and food for eternal life.