

Homily
August 4, 2024
18th Sunday in Ordinary Time
31:13 – 38:26

Human beings can be “short-sighted.” Now, I’m not referring to Mrs. Morris’s little munchkins, who when they stand this low (bending over to demonstrate), are short-sighted. No. I am talking about only seeing this moment, here. Ignoring what has been and seeing no connection to what can be.

Have you ever done that?

I’m sure at the moment you fell and scraped your knees, Sister Mary Ann, that’s all you could think about. Right? Right. And as they ache and itch right now, it’s going to get in the way. Well, it may. Maybe you’re stronger than I am. (Response: Probably not.)

Well, I mention this because both the First Reading and the Gospel make it very clear that God’s people can be short-sighted.

Our First Reading comes from Exodus Chapter 16. Just prior to this, in Chapters 14 and 15, God has rescued the people, brought them redemption and salvation by taking them out of Egypt, through the Red Sea, wasted their enemies and set them **free**.

Then, in a wonderful song, they proclaim God’s goodness and majesty and wonder. And even Miriam, Moses’ sister, proclaims it anew, immediately after. It’s wonderful!

Turn the page, Chapter 16, and guess what – they’re grumbling already. Why? Because in that present moment they were blinded by their stomachs. They were hungry. They were in the desert. They were afraid. They couldn’t see a future. And they surely couldn’t remember the past because the pain in their belly got the better of them. So, they complain and grumble.

Come on, people. Can’t you think back? Can’ you remember? Remember the wonderful meal you shared the night before you were set free, where you gathered and proclaimed God’s goodness, that he was going to do something wonderful?

No. Can’t remember it. We’re hungry. Our bellies hurt.

If you continue to read through the Book of Exodus, it happens again and again and again. They struggle to not be short-sighted.

The Gospel is quite a good parallel. This is Chapter 6, the second week we've heard from Chapter 6 of John's Gospel. And we'll hear it for three more.

What went before, though, was a miraculous feeding of thousands from very little. And immediately the people were amazed. They were well fed, and their bellies were full.

Then Jesus and his disciples go home to Capernaum to rest. And the people follow them in boats. This is very unusual. The people follow them in boats across the sea.

And when they get there, they want this Jesus again. And what do they want? Food! Food for their bellies. It must have been a long journey by boat. So, they start asking for it. Again.

No matter what Jesus says, that's what their fixation is: food for their stomachs. They're not remembering what took place, although it has motivated them. And they're surely not seeing into the future, where this Jesus is trying to lead them. They can't see him as *spiritually* the Bread of Life.

No. They want food. So they don't "get it."

And for the next three weeks we're going to see how badly that all falls apart for them.

Yes. We human beings – ancient, as well as present – can be very short-sighted. We don't mean to be. I mean, we don't go out of our way to be short-sighted. Do we? No. It just happens.

Perhaps this week, you and I can spend some time in reflection of where in our lives have we forgotten what God has done for us. How God has provided. How his providence continues to walk with us.

It probably is not about our bellies so much. Have you noticed - we're not really starving. But are there not other things in our lives where there's a hole, where there's a longing, where there's a profound distraction that keeps us from seeing fully?

Whatever that is in your life, or in mine, do your best to recall that which has been and where that is going to lead you into eternal life.