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**From the Selected Works of Reverend Lawrence E. Frizzell, D.Phil.**

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August 2, 2009

# Faith in Jesus and His Power

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## **Faith in Jesus and His Power**

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This article was previously published in *The Catholic Advocate*.

## **Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time**

Sunday Readings for August 2, 2009 for Cycle B:

Ex 16:2-4, 12-15; Ps 78; Eph 4:17, 22-24; Jn 6:24-35

### **FAITH IN JESUS AND HIS POWER**

*Lawrence E. Frizzell*

From time to time we hear the complaint that Sunday worship is boring. "I don't get anything out of it, so why bother?" Such an attitude on the part of the baptized displays either ignorance of the drama of the Church's liturgy or perhaps a dormant faith.

The purpose of Christian worship, besides fulfilling the universal human responsibility to adore God, is to bring the Paschal Mystery into the daily lives of the faithful. "It was in the Paschal Mystery that the Son of God incarnate, having been obedient unto the death of the cross, was raised so high by his resurrection and ascension that he was able to share his own divine life with the world... This is accomplished by faith and by the sacraments of faith..." (Sacred Congregation of Rites, *Instruction on the Proper Implementation of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, (September 26, 1964, #6).

Yes, there are many who have become imbued with tendencies promoted in popular culture. Their concern for possessions, pleasure and power obscure the values proclaimed by the Gospel. Their faith in the person and work of Jesus must be activated before they will be able to face the challenges that can sweep away all the goods accumulated through the efforts to find happiness and security in merely human terms. Subtle forms of idolatry block the maturing of faith in ways that direct attacks on Christianity might fail to achieve. Peoples of Eastern Europe who have repelled valiantly the assaults on their faith under Communism must now cope with the temptation that insinuate themselves into the experience of freedom. As we pray for them, we also examine our own conscience.

Of course we have a right to food, clothing and shelter, but does a preoccupation with ever extending our security obscure our faith in divine providence? Thus the ancient Israelites objected to the way Moses and Aaron led them out of Egypt. How quickly they forgot about their servitude! They had meat or fish and bread then, but the complainers failed to recall that spiritual and personal rights were denied. Through the gifts of manna and quail in the wilderness the people of Israel had to learn that faith includes an act of trust in God day by day. We echo this lesson with the familiar petition: "Give us this day our daily bread."

Jesus indeed showed compassion for the hungry and suffering but his generosity was always linked to deeper needs. "Do not labor for the food that perishes but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of man will give to you..." (Jn 6:27). The direct contrast between the natural and spiritual orders in this statement need not involve a denial of responsibilities. Rather than working merely for terrestrial nourishment, the faithful are called above all seek eternal life (see Matthew 6:33). The fundamental activity is an act of faith. "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent" (Jn 6:29).

The Israelites in the wilderness learned that God would provide for their true needs; sustenance for their journey was offered daily until they came finally to the promised land. Jesus taught that his Father would continue to offer the necessities of life to his people. "My Father gives you the real bread from heaven" (Jn 6:33). The manna served a purpose in ancient times and also became a sign for people to understand an essential aspect of Jesus' work. The Son of man will give the food that endures to eternal life (see 6:27); he himself constitutes the bread that gives life to the world (6:33-35). However, before the manna can be recognized as a preparation for the Eucharistic gift of Christ, the Church must instruct her members so that each knows the Lord and his work. They must recognize that only God can satisfy the human desire for happiness. "The one who comes to me shall not hunger and the one who believes in me shall never thirst" (6:35).