

August 2, 2026-18th Sunday in Ordinary Time

The Jews were waiting for the Messiah throughout their long history. In the Book of Genesis, right after the Fall of Adam, God promised them that the Messiah would come and conquer the devil. Genesis 3:15 specifically mentions His Mother, the “**woman**” who would be opposed to Satan. Christ is the Greek form of the word Messiah, which means “**the anointed One**”. Kings and priests and prophets were anointed with the oil of Holy chrism; it set them aside for their mission from God. The covenant with Moses and then with King David, clarified the role of the Messiah. They believed that when he came, there would be a new and greater Exodus than at the time of Moses and that He would give them a new and greater manna than God gave them in the desert; He would be king in the line of David.

Isaiah prophesized that the Messiah would be the “**Suffering Servant**” in chapter 53, but he doesn’t stop there. He goes on. In the First Reading today, two chapters later, Isaiah gave us the results. He foretold a great banquet that the Messiah will provide. It will be free! He said, “**Come, without paying and without cost, drink wine and milk! Why spend your money for what is not bread; your wages for what fails to satisfy? Heed me and you shall eat well, you shall delight in rich fare.**” In a world where you had to struggle just to obtain your daily bread, the promise of a banquet was delightful. The Messianic banquet became a symbol of the eternal joy that God would give to His people.

As Christians, it is easy for us to look back in history and see how Jesus fulfilled all these promises from the Old Testament. Jesus was of the house and lineage of King David through both the family of St. Joseph and the family of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Even though Joseph didn’t have power or wealth, he was of kingly ancestry and passed this on to his foster Son. The Book of Hebrews tells us that Jesus was also the High Priest. “**You are a priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek**” (10:6). Jesus wasn’t anointed with the oil of chrism as king and priest, rather He had greater anointing with the Holy Spirit at the time of His baptism by John the Baptist in the Jordan River.

From the time of Moses, the Jews were expecting that the Messiah would lead them on a new and greater Exodus. Moses led the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt, but Jesus came into this world to lead us out of slavery to sin and death. St. Luke (9:30) tells us in the account of the Transfiguration that Moses and Elijah

were in glory speaking to Him about His upcoming exodus, which was His death on the Cross.

The Messiah would bring them the new manna. They could never have imagined the greatness of this gift to His Church! The Gospel this Sunday told us of the account of the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves and the fish. Just a few loaves of bread and fish would miraculously feed thousands who were listening to Jesus in a deserted place. It was foreshadowing the Holy Eucharist and the eternal banquet of heaven.

St. John gives us a more detailed account of this event in his chapter 6. After the miracle the crowds speak about the manna that Moses gave them and wondered what Jesus would do for them. Jesus responded **“Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven; my Father gives you the true bread from heaven.”** He continues, **“I am the bread of life”** and **“He who eats my Flesh and drinks my Blood has eternal life.”** Jesus laid out the whole doctrine of the Eucharist which He would establish a year later at the Last Supper. After these 2000 years we still marvel at the gift of the new manna, the Holy Eucharist, which we are blessed to receive in this great Sacrament.

As great as it is, our Christian faith involves more than understanding God’s plan of salvation and its fulfillment in Jesus. Pope Benedict XVI wrote in his first Encyclical these words, **“Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction. St. John’s Gospel describes that event in these words: ‘God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should . . . have eternal life.’** The late pope told us that we need to get to know Jesus Christ in a very personal way, along with our Father and the Holy Spirit, of course.

We should know the teachings of Jesus and His Church, but we need more than intellectual knowledge. We should follow the Commandments in a world that makes it ever more difficult, but it is not only a matter of obeying laws. As Pope Benedict wrote, it is about a relationship, an encounter with Someone, with God, in the Person of Jesus. We must learn to know Him as a friend, as a brother who has already proven His love by laying down His life for our salvation on the Cross. Over the next several Sundays, I would like to reflect upon the idea of our need to encounter God in prayer. What is prayer and how should we pray?