

## Real bread

2809

Lord of all power and might,  
the author and giver of all good things,  
graft in our hearts the love of your name,  
increase in us true religion,  
nourish us with all goodness  
and of your great mercy keep us in the same.

My text may be found in today's gospel from John, 'Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you.' (6 v27)

It rained. Then rain is an inevitable part of an English summer so it should have come as no surprise when it did. So much work went into the preparation for the event that what we actually saw on the day was just the tip of the iceberg, resulting in numerous necessary marquees and an endless supply of cake. I want to echo Sybil's thanks of Claude and Agnes for opening their house and grounds again this year, to Helen for co-ordinating the teas and to Peter for masterminding the erection and tomorrow deconstruction of the tents. The Garden Party raises necessary money for the maintenance of our church but it also provides an opportunity for our Christian witness in the area. One family from outside Plancoët said they'd been in France for five years and this was this first time they had heard of St Bartholomew's!

With our own abundance, how far removed we must seem from the context of today's teaching from Jesus. He has just fed a hungry crowd of some 5,000 folk with what must have seemed like a never-ending supply of loaves and fish; now, a day later, the crowd has followed him round the Lake to see if there's another free meal to hand. But Jesus challenges the crowd to look further than their next physical meal to what really matters, their spiritual food. We do need to feed the body, of course we do, and in my last School there was an opportunity for pupils to have breakfast in the School Dining Hall before the bell went for morning registration. But the prime purpose of any school is to feed the mind not the body. And it is to this that Jesus points in today's gospel: 'Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures for eternal life'. We need to feed not only our body but our mind and our spirit too; we need food for the soul as well as the body.

'Give us today our daily bread runs one line of the Lords Prayer', the prayer Jesus taught his disciples, the prayer they passed on to us as the model for all our prayer. Our 'daily bread' is a powerful image which encapsulates the idea of a staple food necessary to sustain our life. But the idea of our daily bread suggests we need not only physical food but also soul food: We need to be conscious both of our physical and of our spiritual well being. And it is in the provision of the latter that Jesus excels: he is the source of teaching that will enable us to grow up into spiritual adults which St Paul urges us to do in 1 Corinthians 14 v20. But this morning's gospel passage ends with one of the seven great 'I am' statements. Jesus says: 'I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry and

whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.’ In short, Jesus is saying he is God, ‘I am’, and as God, he affirms that he is the source of spiritual food and drink which will never dry up.

In L’Eglise Sainte Croix at St Servan there is currently an exhibition on Jeanne Jugan (1792 – 1879) who founded the Little Sisters of the Poor and whom the Pope will canonise as a saint in St Peter’s Square on 11<sup>th</sup> October this year. Born along the coast in Cancale, Jeanne Jugan was convinced that God was calling her to serve him. Working as a nurse’s aide at Le Rosais Hospital in St Servan, she opened her home one winter’s evening to a blind, semi-paralysed, elderly woman giving up her own bed for the woman. From this small act of kindness started an association of women dedicated to helping the poor which, as the Little Sisters of the Poor, was to become a world-wide presence to show the love of God by physically and spiritually caring for those in need.

In each Eucharist, in each service of Holy Communion, in the consecrated host we have an effective visual aid of Jesus’ teaching. This wafer embodies and symbolises the presence with us of Jesus Christ, the bread of life. By eating the wafer, we are being reminded of his presence in our lives. By being present, Jesus can feed us physically and spiritually. But the challenge to us remains in today’s text: ‘Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures for eternal life’. And that is what we hope to achieve by the money raised at the Garden Party: to maintain our church physically so that it can be a source of spiritual food for all who come through our doors.

I have spoken in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,  
Amen.

*Preached at the Eucharist*

*St Bartholomew's Dinard*

*2<sup>nd</sup> August, 2009*

H: Sermon 20: Real bread1

