

**Sermon Summary**  
**14<sup>th</sup> after Pentecost**  
**18<sup>th</sup> September 2011**

- Exodus 16:2-15 leaves us with the question: how did it take the Israelites so long to get to the promised Land. The geography suggests they are not that far apart.
- The answer is found in the grumbling of the people of Israel. They block the movement of God by their own stubbornness.
- Despite their grumbling, God feeds them with manna in the wilderness.
- There are strict instructions on how manna is to be collected, and when it should be stored. This follows our reading. The Israelites, of course, ignore it at first.
- Manna, or bread, comes to stand not just for bread, as though God opens a heavenly Bakers' delight, but for the teaching of God, the wisdom which instructs us in how to live.
- We often imitate the foolishness of the people of Israel. Think of the instructions for manna as if they stood for reading the word of God. Then we should feed on such food every day, and constantly refresh ourselves with it. But often our spiritual reading resembles the Israelites. We store up manna or teaching in our Sunday School days, and are surprised when, years later, it no longer inspires, feeds or satisfies. Like the original manna, it is shot through with worms and our neglect and disobedience render it "past its sell-by date".
- John 6 takes up these themes. Jesus first provides bread, which is then interpreted as teaching, instruction and wisdom. Jesus becomes the bread and the teaching necessary for authentic living.
- But John adds a further twist. The chance for us to receive this word and strength in the sacraments.
- This brings an added blessing. For the people of Israel were in a holding pattern waiting to enter the Promised Land. But the sacrament gives us today a foretaste of our Promised Land, the communion of saints, the Messianic banquet celebrated by the faithful people of God when his plan for the world is fully resolved.

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