

## **Reflection: John 6.24-35**

**In this conversation between Jesus and some people who had followed him across the Sea of Galilee, there is a reference to an important event in the history of the Jewish people.**

**After Jesus fed a crowd of 5,000 people, he crossed the Sea of Galilee only to be followed the next morning by some of the crowd.**

**In this conversation about food that perishes and food that endures, the people reminded Jesus of an event from their history: “Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness.”**

**It is a story worth recalling.**

**The Israelite people had been led out of slavery in Egypt and had wandered for about two months in the wilderness east of Egypt, the area we know as the Sinai peninsula at the northern end of the Red Sea.**

**They believed that it was God, through Moses, who had led them out of Egypt, and this freedom became the defining event in their history. They owed their freedom to God. But two months after they left Egypt, they ran out of food. They began to**

**complain that in Egypt, even though they were slaves, at least they had food to eat.**

**So Moses talked with God about the situation, and God told Moses that he would “rain bread from heaven” for the people.**

**The next morning dew covered the ground, and when the dew evaporated a flaky substance was left behind. It tasted, we are told, like wafers made with honey, and it could be ground and made into cakes.**

**The story says that when the wandering Israelites first saw the flaky substance on the ground, “they said to one another ‘What is it? For they did not know what it was.’”**

**They called it “manna,” and there is an interesting play on words here. The Hebrew phrase for “What is it?” is pronounced something like man hu.**

**Man hu; what is it? Manna—“the bread that the Lord has given you.” And they ate it for forty years.**

**When he was reminded of the story, Jesus carried the meaning a step further: “I tell you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you**

**the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.”**

**And the people made a request: “Sir, give us this bread always.” Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry.”**

**We may reflect on this when we come to the Lord’s table for the sacrament of Communion. When we partake of the sacrament we eat bread that resembles the manna provided in the wilderness. And we claim that it represents Jesus, the very Bread of Life.**

**What is it?**

**It is freedom from the distress of life. It is sustenance in the wilderness of life. It is grace in the pain of life. It is God’s presence in the loneliness of life.**

**What is it?**

**It is rest in the demands of life. It is peace in the disruptions of life. It is community in the isolation of life. It is security in the uncertainty of life.**

**What is it?**

**It is manna rained from heaven. It is bread that nourishes the soul. It is Christ, the Bread of heaven, which will “feed us till we want no more.”**

**Let us pray...**

**God of hope,  
when your hungry people longed for the slave food of Egypt,  
you opened the doors of heaven and rained down manna.  
Feed us with the bread of life at your table,  
that we may taste the freedom of eternal life  
and lead lives worthy of our calling,  
through Christ our head. Amen.**