

Homily – 19th Sunday in Ordinary Time, B
By Bob Schramm, OSFS

Few things speak as wonderfully about life
as the smell of fresh baked bread.
Did you ever go into a bakery, especially early in the morning?
Or maybe you have memories of bread baking at home.
The smell of fresh bread is the smell of life itself!

I was part of a wedding in this chapel this past Friday.
It was the wedding of the daughter of Connie and Bob Sielski
who are part of this Sunday community.
Their daughter's name is Alyse
and she married a young man whose name is Drew Flom.
They've both been studying hard in school
but they come here for Mass from time to time.
The wedding was a celebration of all that is good in life:
a bright, promising future for a young, vibrant couple.
Something like the smell of fresh baked bread.

But there is another story to bread.
St. Augustine once said in a homily:
(Imagine him holding a loaf of bread that he would pray over shortly.)
"Surely this loaf was not made from one grain of wheat?
The grains were separate before they came together to become one loaf.
They were joined together by water, after first having been ground.
For if the many kernels are not ground and are not moistened by water,
they could not come to this form, that we call bread
... And then without fire, there is still not a loaf of bread."

When Jesus refers to himself as "the bread of life" and "the living bread,"
both those stories, those aspects, about bread are implied.
There is a certain ambiguity and tension about the meaning of it all
and it's important to respect that.

On the one hand the bread represents everything in life, everything in the world,
that's healthy, young, beautiful and bursting with energy,
Bread represents the goodness of this Earth, the joy of human achievements,
celebration and festivity.
The Eucharist too gives off the smell of fresh bread.

But that's only half of it.
Eucharist also holds up all that is being crushed, broken
and baked by violence.

St. Paul insists that the newly baptized Ephesians put aside
"wrath and anger and wrangling and slander."

**You can't turn the radio or television on these days
without hearing awful reports about just those kind of things.**

**We say we "eat the bread of life ... the living bread."
That is meant to instill in us
what Paul means to instill in those Ephesians when he says:
"Be kind to one another, tenderhearted,
forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you."**

**As we heard in the story about Elijah:
"Eat, or the journey will be too long for you."
Eat this bread of life, this living bread.**

**We've had a tendency to hear words like
being "raised up on the last day" and this talk of "eternal life"
as being about what happens to you after you die.
The focus of Jesus is on the here and now.
We are all living right now in the last, the final days.
Jesus' resurrection has ushered in those final days.**

**When Jesus speaks of eternal life, he's really speaking of the fullness of life.
He is calling us to live life fully here and now.**

**Jesus, this carpenter's son, this hick from up north, this very ordinary person,
makes an almost outlandish claim in what we just heard.
"I am the bread of life
I am the living bread come down from heaven."**

**Goes back to Moses standing at a burning bush that is not consumed
He asks the name of the voice he is hearing.
The voice replies "Tell them 'I AM' sent you"
Jesus claims to be one with that I AM.**

**We see, we touch, in the Eucharist, the goodness and joy of life
and the pains and shortcomings of that same life.
It is the same tension that we need to hold up each day
within our ordinary lives.**