

Homily -- Ordinary Time 18 B 2018
by Rev. Bob Schramm, OSFS

One of the people I turn to often in preparing to preach is Fr. Ron Rolheiser. He teaches theology in Texas and belongs to an order called the Oblates of Mary Immaculate. That's a slightly different brand of Oblate than I am.

Rolheiser tells a story about a French Trappist monk, Christian de Cherge, who was martyred in Algeria in 1996. Some of you may have seen the movie about him and his companions called *Of Gods and Men*.

According to Rolheiser, when the monk was a child of 6, he was about to make his First Communion. One day he said to his mother, "I don't understand what I'm doing."

She answered simply: "It's okay, you don't have to understand it now, later you will understand."

You know, I'm 77 and I still find myself saying about what happens at Mass, "I don't understand what I'm doing."

Every once in a while I get a glimpse of something pretty awesome about what we do here. Most of the time, however, I come here trusting that it's where God wants me to be for some almost unexplainable reason.

In today's Gospel, people come to Jesus seeking a sign. It was right after he had fed them with the five loaves and two fish.

"Explain to us what this is really all about ... Explain this to us. What did you just do? How did you do it? Why did you do it?"

We are invited ... no, we're commanded ... to eat his flesh and drink his blood. On the surface that can sound downright disgusting. And that's part of the challenge of coming to terms with the what, the how and the why of this.

Slowly it begins to dawn on us as we keep coming back to it again and again. We repeat this ritual over and over and in doing so, we're called to believe that we are gaining understanding.

Audra Turnbull is taking vows in a few moments. That's a big leap into the unknown. Seems like fewer and fewer folks are willing to take that leap today. There really is no way of knowing what the future may hold in becoming a sister ... or for that matter, in taking on a commitment to marry, for another example.

So, we thank you Audra for the risk you're taking. What you do here really helps all of us be a little more faithful to be faithful to a trust that we are coming, slowly, to understand.

The bread the Hebrews were given in the desert came in once-a-day packets, no more. They had to live just one day at a time, trusting that God would provide. The food, the sustenance, the understanding we need comes to us just a bit at a time.

St. Paul reminds us today

"In baptism you put on a new self, created according to the likeness of God in true right-relationship and holiness."

Jesus says whoever comes to him will never be hungry; whoever believes in him will never thirst. We come here so that we can grow in trust that our hungers are being satisfied, our thirsting is being quenched.

That's why being part of this week after week, or even day after day, this ritual we call Eucharist is profoundly valuable and important.

Tomorrow is the 73rd anniversary of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima. Indiscriminate bombing of an entire population: 75,000 died instantly. This is what happens when human beings ignore the implications of Eucharistic sharing.

"The Losing Math of Hate"

A woman in northern Virginia finds a bag filled with bird seed with a note signed KKK saying "Wake up White America." She began talking with people and made a sign: "Hate Has No Home Here." Soon, there were thousands of those signs. This is what happens when people live the implications of Eucharist

Today you may not understand, but later you will understand. It takes a lifetime to barely scratch the surface.