

## Reflection for May 5, 2025

by Joan Mumaw, IHM

Daniel Berrigan, an advocate of non-violence who spent many years in prison for witnessing the Gospel message, once said, **“If you want to follow Jesus, you’d better look good on wood.”**

This statement sums up the experience of many of the early disciples. The reading of today and tomorrow need to be read together, they are of a piece; we read of Steven, who, filled with grace and the power of the Spirit, testified to Jesus, the Holy One of God. The people could not understand Steven, who spoke with Wisdom, in the spirit of the prophets. For this, Steven was stoned to death. While asking the Lord Jesus to receive his spirit, Steven also asked that the Holy One not hold this sin against them. Saul, later to be called Paul, consented to the execution.

During this Easter season, we read of the persecution of the disciples who were seen as a threat to the Jewish leaders who were subjugated to the rulers of the Roman Empire. Martyrdom and suffering accompanied the early disciples and seems to be the lot of those today who are followers of Jesus. We can only recall in our own time the deaths of the Maryknoll Sisters (1980) and Jesuit martyrs (1989) in El Salvador, and the deaths of five Sisters, Adorers of the Blood of Christ, in Liberia in 1992. Recently, many priests have been killed in Nigeria and we continue to keep in prayer our two sisters in Haiti who were murdered. “If you want to follow Jesus, you’d better look good on wood.”

In the Gospel reading of today and tomorrow, Jesus the teacher, leads the crowds to reflection on why they continue to seek him out. “You are looking for me not because you saw signs, but because you ate and were filled.” In this teachable moment, Jesus tells them not “to work for the food that perishes, but for food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man would give them. On him, the Father, God has set his seal.” The people continue to question Jesus; they want to know how to accomplish the work of God. Perhaps causing more confusion, Jesus tells them, “This is the work of God that you believe in the one he sent.” The singular work, the all-important work of God, is the act of faith in Jesus.

For the people, questions abound. What is the work of God? Who is the one sent by God? Who is this Son of Man?

In the Gospel reading for tomorrow, the people continue their quest for understanding and ask Jesus for a sign, remembering how he multiplied the loaves and fish on the mountainside. They recalled how their ancestors ate manna in the desert and how it is written. “He gave them bread from heaven to eat.”

Jesus led the people to see that he is the new Moses and that the “manna in the desert” was in fact a gift of the Father, coming down from heaven, giving life to the world.

The people now ask, "Sir, give us this bread always." Jesus responds, "I am the bread of life, whoever comes to me will never hunger and whoever believes in me will never thirst." In saying this, Jesus reveals himself as the Holy One of God, the Messiah. The whole purpose of Jesus' coming from the Father, as once the manna came down from heaven to feed the Israelites in the desert, is to make available a new quality of life. Jesus offers eternal life now with the promise of the full embodied experience of eternal life to come.

In this short section, the essential elements of the Eucharist are present: bread, life-giving water or wine and community, prefiguring our common ritual.

**Today, let us reflect on the work of God for me. Believing in the one whom God has sent, the one on whom God has sent his seal, has ramifications for how we live our lives. Relationships matter...Discipleship is costly. How good will you look on wood?**