

I would like to begin today by telling you an old Japanese fable.
It is the story of Tasuku .

Tasuku was a poor man who cut blocks of stone from the foot of a mountain. One day he saw a well-dressed prince parade by. Tasuku envied the prince and wished that he could have that kind of wealth. The Great Spirit heard Tasuku, and he was made a prince.

Tasuku was happy with his silk clothes and his powerful armies until he saw the sun wilt the flowers in his royal garden. He wished for such power as the sun had, and his wish was granted. He became the sun, with power to parch fields and humble people with thirst.

Tasuku was happy to be the sun until a cloud covered him and obscured his powerful heat. With that, he had another wish, and the Spirit complied. Thereafter Tasuku was a cloud with the power to ravage the land with floods and storms.

Tasuku was happy until he saw the mountain remain in spite of his storm. So Tasuku demanded to be the mountain. The Spirit obeyed. Tasuku became the mountain and was more powerful than the prince, the sun, or the cloud. And he was happy until he felt a chisel chipping at his feet. It was a stonecutter working away - cutting blocks to sell to make his daily living.

Like Tasuku, like the Israelites in the desert and the crowd around Jesus, they all HAD but they want something MORE.

The majority of us are constantly seeking something and that something is naturally better than what we have- we work hard or we play, we build or we drink, we eat, we join clubs and societies or we go to parties or events, hoping to find in these activities some form of peace, some form of inner quiet, some form of satisfaction. - yet, despite all we do, we continue to hunger and thirst for such things.

What are you and I looking for? What will make us happy? What will set our souls at rest??

Tasuku never found out - even though all his wishes were granted by the Great Spirit.

We are told that there **are** some things that are more satisfying than what money or success can bring us.

It is often said that health is one of these. And anyone of us who has had to live with **poor** health is keenly aware of the value of **good** health. But even health is a passing thing.

Philosophers, sages and some religious leaders would tell us that insteadVIRTUE ... is what we should seek. That honesty, integrity, compassion, a forgiving spirit, a kind heart are of greater and of more lasting value than large houses, new cars, and big bank accounts. And there is some truth in that.

But what Jesus speaks of in today's gospel is more than honesty and integrity; it is even greater than a compassionate and forgiving heart, it is even better than virtue - or striving to lead a moral and upright life -because these things too may perish, or at the very least be confounded by our wounded human nature.

No - when Jesus spoke of the Bread that lasts forever he spoke of **Himself**, and of belief in **Him**.

Jesus said "This is the work of God that you **believe** in Him whom He has sent."

In our culture, faith or belief has a strong intellectual character. It is considered primarily to be an act of the mind.

But, in the Middle Eastern world, in Jesus' culture the words "faith;" and "belief;" "fidelity;" "loyalty", "commitment", and "solidarity" are synonymous and they describe the **glue** that binds one **person** to another **person**. These are not acts of the mind so much as sentiments that spring from the heart and soul as well as the mind.

So the act of faith we are asked to make is a RELATIONSHIP..... a PERSON to PERSON affair of the heart with Jesus, the one God sent, the Bread of Life Himself.

When we unpack this, some of what we find is that this Liturgy, this Eucharistic celebration, is not just bread and wine, not just a meal we have shared, not just fellowship, not something we have artistically dreamed up.

Its reality does not depend upon our ingenuity or virtue, our expertise in preaching or singing or reading. It is **fundamentally** an **act** and **gift** of **God**.

Our **act and gift** in this Liturgy *in return to God* is to **receive** **His gift**, to be **nourished** by it, to **believe** it, to **ALLOW** this Bread of Life, this Cup of Salvation to fundamentally **CHANGE** us, by bringing us into RELATIONSHIP with Jesus.

The Eucharist does **not** make us **better** at being virtuous, or righteous or more loving.

It configures us more closely to Christ so that **His** Virtue is OURS, **His** righteousness is OURS, that **His** love for all is OURS. That is what St. Paul means when he tells us in today's second reading to "**put on the new self, created in God's way...**"

And the **amazing** thing is that God **desires** to do this within the framework of our everyday lives.

Like Tasuku, we still have our mountains to chip at every day. But what do we do with the stones?

Each week, when we come together, we place our offerings in the basket, a symbol of the value of the fruits of our labor. This is a good thing, this giving of ourselves.

But...we are also called to place our hurts and our joys, our needs and our thanksgivings, our hopes and dreams, our very selves *by prayer*, into the bread and wine that is brought up, not by visiting dignitaries, but by our friends and neighbors.

The Bread of Life consecrated from these gifts *that are now our selves*, at the hands of our priest sanctifies our doing the laundry, it elevates our homework, it makes our jobs holy and it makes all of our mundane day-to-day duties and feelings an act of Honor and Glory and brings Eternal Purpose to our victories and our brokenness.

That's one of the reasons that the Church **insists** we come to Mass every Sunday.

Because it is in **THIS WAY.... this gracious giving of God and the repeated giving and surrendering of ourselves,.....**

.....**in our becoming, *not-just -more-like Christ***, but rather..... becoming more **Christed**..... that the Bread of Life continually feeds us.... never allowing us to go hungry. Our belief, our **relationship** with Jesus never allows us to thirst again.... **for all that we do**, all that we become *IN CHRIST***satisfies** all of our desires.