

# 19th Sunday of Ordinary Time

Cycle B

August 12, 2012 4 and 5:30pm, 7:30 and 9am

Saint Margaret Parish, Bel Air

## A Mother's Love

The well-known French author Victor Hugo tells a very touching story.

The setting is in France, in the year 1793, right after the French Revolution. A young mother and her two children are homeless and poor.

They have wandered through the woods and fields for several days. They are living on roots, bulbs, and any edible vegetation they can find.

One morning, they see two soldiers approaching and they hide in the bushes. One of the soldiers – a sergeant – spots them and orders them to come out into the open.

The captain realizes that they are on the verge of starvation and quickly offers the mother a baguette of bread. She immediately breaks it into two pieces and gives half of the baguette to each of her children.

The children ravenously eat the bread and the mother just watches with contentment in her eyes. The sergeant is surprised that the mother has kept none of the bread for herself.

He says to his captain, *“Is it because the mother is not hungry?”* And the captain replies, *“No, Sergeant, it is because she is a mother.”*

## God's Love

This mother's love in Victor Hugo's story is a wonderful reflection of God's love for us.

This mother gives her children all the bread she has and in effect gives them her life. In a similar way, Jesus gives us the bread that he has and in effect gives his very life to us.

## *The Bread of Life*

This is the *“bread of life”* that Jesus speaks of in today's gospel and it has several dimensions to it.

We may not usually think of it this way, but *“the bread of life”* is first of all God's Word – the Word of God.

If we just think about it, hasn't there been a time when the Scripture passage you've heard or the reflection of a priest or deacon here at Mass has gotten you through a rough time? Hasn't there

been a time when it has given you an insight on how to handle something or helped you make an important decision?

Aren't there times when God's Word has fed you with a word or sentence or story or idea that just seems to be spoken personally and directly to you? So the bread of life is first of all the bread of God's Word.

And then, Jesus himself is quite literally the "*bread of life*" for us.

He literally gives himself to us in the bread and wine, his body and blood. If we just think about it, haven't there been times when we have just hungered or yearned for the Eucharist?

Haven't there been times when we have felt alone or lost or empty with all that is going on in life and we just needed this bread? So the bread of life is also the bread of Jesus' presence with us in the Eucharist.

And then the "*bread of life*" is also the bread of community.

Here at Mass we are a group of fellow believers who are nourished with the same bread of the Word and the same bread of Jesus' presence. If we just think about it, don't we prefer to gather for a meal with family or friends and people with whom we have something in common and don't we find this life-giving?

Haven't we found that here, with other persons of faith, we have been fed with needed comfort in our troubles and with caring challenge about our thinking or lifestyle? So the bread of life is also the bread of community.

### **One Qualification: Hunger**

I have one final thought.

In Victor Hugo's story, the mother gives the entire baguette to her children for one reason. They are hungry.

Jesus does the same for us. His bread, "*the bread of life*," is not just for the good or the best or the perfect.

Instead, it is for all of us – human, imperfect, with a mix of virtue and sin. In the feeding of the 5,000 and even at the Last Supper, he offers the gift of bread to everyone and there is only one requirement – that they are hungry.

So, we are to come here hungry, hungry for the bread of God's Word and the bread of Jesus' presence and the bread of community. And with this hunger, we are assured that we will be fed by the One who is the bread of life.