21.4.21

​

Read: John 6:35-40

This very instructive and hugely encouraging passage comes from what is commonly referred to as 'the bread of life discourse' in John's gospel. The discourse follows immediately on the miracle of 'the feeding of the five thousand' and, together with John's account of the miracle at the marriage feast at Cana (2:1-11), anticipates the eucharistic liturgy where Jesus gives himself to us as food, under the visible signs of bread and wine. Today's passage from the discourse needs unpacking slowly.

Jesus said to the crowd, "I am the bread of life. He who..... believes in me will never thirst. But, as I have told you.....still you do not believe (in me)". Well, we can honestly say we do believe in him, as baptised Christians doing our best to live out faithful lives, but at the same time the reality is that in a very real way we still don't; we find we are unable to stand up to being blown this way and that by our desires, fears and preferences in general, as opposed to our lives being handed over 100% to Jesus and the will of the Father. But the infinitely consoling thing for us is that "whoever comes to me I shall not turn away"; Jesus does not expect us to be perfect (or even likeable!) but calls us to entrust ourselves to him so that in his time, by his grace, he can perfect us.

"I shall not turn him/her away; because I have come from heaven, not to do my own will, but to do the will of the one who sent me." A fascinating implication may be seen here. What might Jesus' personal will have been - could it really have been other than that of the Father? Why are those words about 'not doing his own will' put in, and what could they be pointing to? Here we need to remind ourselves that Jesus' humanity was real. His life on earth was as a real human being with human personality, inclinations, preferences and fears just like the rest of us - he was like us in all things but sin and could make choices. He could be (and, as we know, was) tempted to go his own way according to his own human preferences; he had likes and dislikes. So, just like us he must have found some people much more attractive than others, and must have been tempted to pick and choose according to his own personal preferences. But he was without sin, so always put his own preferences aside, because he came "not to do my own will, but do the will of the one who sent me". Jesus' human inclinations do not deflect him from the Father's will, which is that we should all be brought by Jesus to Him in his heavenly home.

"Now the will of him who sent me is that I should lose nothing of all that he has given to me, and that I should raise it up on the last day. Yes,.....whoever sees the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life". It is just 6 verses before today's passage that we read of the people asking Jesus "What must we do if we are to do the works that God wants?" And Jesus replies "This is working for God: you must believe in the one he has sent." It is the entrusting of our lives in every aspect to Jesus that is key, that opens the door to our receiving eternal life. God the Father does not expect us to perfect ourselves (we cannot) but calls us to entrust ourselves to his Son, receiving him not least sacramentally in the eucharist, for he is the bread of life for us.