

Jesus, the Bread of Life — and the Gift of Faith

Homily by Father Bob Gillelan — April 21, 2026

When we hear Jesus speaking to the people in today's Gospel, He reminds them of something very important: it was not Moses who gave their ancestors bread in the desert—it was God.

In doing this, Jesus reveals something deeper: God is greater than Moses. And then Jesus goes even further—He begins what we know as the Bread of Life discourse, referring to Himself as the Bread of Life.

This is a turning point. Jesus is not simply another prophet like Moses. He is greater than Moses. But the people do not understand.

At the same time, in our first reading from the Acts of the Apostles, we hear about St. Stephen, who is boldly preaching about the Resurrection of Jesus.

For this, he is accused of blasphemy—blasphemy against Moses, the Temple, and even God. And as we heard today, they stone him to death.

St. Stephen becomes the first martyr of the Church—the proto-martyr—giving his life for the truth of Jesus Christ.

We begin to see a pattern. The Jewish people had such a deep reverence for Moses—the great lawgiver, the great leader—that for many, Moses became an obstacle to recognizing Jesus as the Messiah.

Even today, many still do not accept that Jesus is divine.

But this doesn't only apply to the past. Even today, many Christians believe in Jesus, but struggle with His teachings—especially when it comes to difficult issues like the dignity of human life, marriage and family, human sexuality, and the sacraments.

Some accept Jesus—but not fully. Some accept parts of His teaching—but not all.

So what do we make of this? We are reminded that faith is a gift.

Faith is not something we arrive at on our own. It is a theological virtue given by God—a grace that opens our minds, our hearts, and our wills to accept the truth of who Jesus is.

So today, we are invited to give thanks for the gift of faith that we have received.

And we remember those who came before us—those like St. Stephen, who gave their lives for that faith.

There is a famous saying from the early Church Father Tertullian: “The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church.”

Because of their witness, the faith has been handed on to us.

May we, like St. Stephen, have the courage to profess our faith boldly, to live it faithfully, and to remain rooted in the truth of Jesus Christ—the Bread of Life, given for the world.