Spirituality
Vatican
Francis, the comic strip



The crowd watches as Pope Francis leads the Angelus message from the window of his studio overlooking St. Peter's Square at the Vatican Aug. 8. In his Angelus message, the pope said Jesus is the "essential bread of life," the one who "makes us feel loved even if everyone else disappoints us" and "gives us the strength to love." (CNS/Vatican Media)

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Jesus wants to nourish the souls of those who are spiritually famished from the loneliness and anguish that come from life's difficulties, Pope Francis said.

"What does he not want? To be relegated to being considered a side dish — he who is bread — to be overlooked and set aside, or called on only when we need him," the pope told pilgrims gathered in St. Peter's Square Aug. 8 during his Sunday Angelus address.

The pope reflected on the Sunday Gospel reading from St. John in which Jesus responded to those who doubted that he was the "bread that came down from heaven."

"I am the bread of life. Your ancestors ate the manna in the desert, but they died; this is the bread that comes down from heaven so that one may eat it and not die," Jesus said.

Commenting on the passage, Francis said bread is a basic necessity needed for survival, especially by the hungry who "do not ask for refined and expensive food, they ask for bread."

"Jesus reveals himself as bread, that is, the essential, what is necessary for everyday life; without him nothing works," the pope said.

"He is not one bread among many others, but the bread of life," he said.

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Without Christ, he added, Christians could only "get by" because he is the only one who can nourish their souls and only he "forgives us from that evil that we cannot

overcome on our own."

"He alone makes us feel loved, even if everyone else disappoints us; he alone gives us the strength to love and, he alone gives us the strength to forgive in difficulties; he alone gives that peace to the heart that it is searching for; he alone gives eternal life when life here on earth ends. He is the essential bread of life," the pope said.

The culmination of Jesus' mission as bread for all is revealed at the Last Supper, when Jesus knows that God "is asking him not only to give food to people, but to give himself, to break himself, his own life, his own flesh, his own heart so that we might have life," the pope continued.

The Eucharist, Francis said, should reawaken in Christians the amazement of God's love for humanity and should be expressed through the adoration of the Blessed Sacrament.

And, he said, before meals, "it would be lovely, before breaking bread, to invite Jesus, the bread of life, to ask him simply to bless what we have done and what we have failed to do. Let us invite him into our home; let us pray in a 'domestic' style. Jesus will be at the table with us and we will be fed by a greater love."