

August 19, 2018

### Get up and eat!

Twice **God** sent an angel to the prophet **Elijah** bringing him some food and ordering him, "***Get up and eat.***" (First Book of Kings 19:4-8). Elijah was exhausted. He had just won a major victory after a confrontation with the Baal prophets. But this then led to his being pursued by Queen Jezebel and her entire army. He was on the run, in the desert, and had lost all hope. This was too much for him to handle on his own. Under a broom tree he sat and began to **pray for death**, "*This is enough, O Lord! Take my life ...*" He then lay down and fell asleep under the broom tree...That is when the Lord sent him some food ...and an angel.

Strengthened by eating the food and drinking the water provided by the angel, Elijah was able to walk for 40 days and 40 nights to the Mountain of God, Mount Horeb.

We can empathize with Elijah's earlier distress. Many of us have felt like Elijah at certain times of our lives when we no longer have hope; when we may be depressed by health difficulties or marital problems, or when we have lost our jobs. We might not pray for death as Elijah did, but in many ways this is unconsciously what may be happening within us. Elijah was not angry at God. He had been successful in defeating the 450 prophets of the Baal god. But he was now under attack from the forces of Queen Jezebel. He felt abandoned and was now alone in the desert.

When I hear the story of Elijah lying exhausted under the broom tree, I always recall my own pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela about 10 years ago. It took me 33 days to walk the 500 miles from Southern France to Compostela. While every day was an adventure, both physical and spiritual, the most difficult day was when I chose the shortest way without knowing that it would go through a totally deserted area. I never carried water or food so as to conserve my energies (my backpack was already heavy). Instead, I had chosen along my trip to stop in villages to get food and water. Yet on that day, there was not a single village. I did not encounter any human being. I was all alone in this deserted area. It was very hot. There was no shade to get some rest. I was thirsty and hungry. Finally I found a tree, and exhausted I lay down in its shade. I felt like Elijah under the broom tree: exhaustion and helplessness (only not pursued by the armies of Queen Jezebel). I felt that I could not go on walking in that heat without food nor water. There was no angel of the Lord to touch me and bring me comfort. But resting in the shade gave me some hope. Finally, though no angel told me to **get up and eat**, I stood up and continued walking! The **Holy Spirit** was guiding my feet! I kept walking! Lo and behold...my little path in the desert crossed a road from which I could see a gas station! It was not a mirage in the desert! I was not hallucinating ...it was a real gas station, and praise the Lord, I could find some water and bread!

Last week, I wrote to you about the reasons why we are to attend Mass every Sunday. Of the five main reasons, the last one mentioned is the amazing grace to **receive God**: the Holy Communion!

At times, it may be hard to get up on Sunday morning. We may feel tired ...or simply lazy and wish to stay longer in bed. We may not have the desire to go to Mass. We may feel like Elijah under the broom tree: exhausted and helpless. Yet this is the very reason why we are to **get up and go to Mass! Get up**

**and eat the Body of Christ, and you will be transformed! You will be able to receive Jesus, the living bread that comes down from heaven and gives us eternal life.**

I invite everyone to meditate on this beautiful verse 6:51 from John's Gospel, *"I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever; and the bread I will give is my flesh for the life of the world."* It summarizes Jesus' discourse on the Bread of Life, which we have been blessed to hear throughout this month of August. While John does not describe the Lord's Last Supper, these are similar words to those we hear from the other Evangelists recalling Jesus' words at His last Supper with the Twelve: *"Then He took the bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them saying, "This is my body, which will be given for you; do this in memory of me.""* (Luke 22:19-20).

These are the words of the Institution of the Eucharist. I invite you to repeat several times slowly Jesus' words, *"Take this, all of you, and eat of it, for this is my body, which will be given up for you."* We hear these words at every Mass at the time of Consecration (when the altar server rings the bells). These words invite us to **get up and eat;** come and receive the Body of Christ. When we receive the Eucharist, we truly believe that we receive the **Living God, the Bread of Life that gives eternal life!**

Holy Spirit, come and help all of us get up every Sunday morning so that we can come to Mass and be fed spiritually! Who can refuse the invitation to receive the Living God?

**One in Christ,  
Fr. Alain**