

Our readings today touch on themes of journey, exhaustion from journeys, despair and defeat, as well as nourishment and loving care when we need it the most.

Elijah was experiencing several of these themes. He just killed several hundred false prophets of Baal, Jezebel was out for his head, and our dear prophet was on the run. He felt he had failed to bring the people around to the Lord and that is where we find him in today's readings. He was tired, most likely scared of those who wish him dead, he felt a failure and was exhausted. How many times, regardless of what good deeds you may have done, just found yourself exhausted? So tired it hurt to think of even taking one more step? It hurt to even think of how much things hurt! We have all been in the moment Elijah is now – I sincerely hope, to today's standards and realities, you are not there from the taking of life but there are countless reasons why each and every one of us may find ourselves at the doorstep of despair or at the base of a bush as the case may be. What is one such issue you struggle with now? What thing, what action, what event has you leaning against a broom bush and saying, "This is enough, O Lord!" (I Kings 19:2)? I want to pause here and actually give you a moment to sort through your emotions and find that one event, person, or thing that most recently has brought you to the point of despair that Elijah is expressing with us today. Maybe it is the same 'thing' you were presenting to God in the Penitential Rite at the beginning of Mass, maybe not. Just continue to process this search for your tiring moment. Maybe there is more than one.

Now, I want you to hold on to that thought as we are going to deal with in momentarily. Didn't come up with one yet? That's okay as we can still learn what to do with such things when they do pop up in our lives. Don't let go of those thoughts now...keep holding on to them!

Let's look at what other people have done when life has given them situations of despair and extreme needs and wants. When God delivered the Jews from the hands of Pharaoh they were taken through the waters of the Red Sea and delivered to safety. As they continued from that point they were at risk of starvation in the desert yet God provided for them every day with a heavenly bread, manna, and water that sprung from a rock. These two events have deep sacramental meaning as the crossing of the Red Sea is a precursor to baptism – being delivered by God through water. The manna and water given from God is a physical nourishment

from God similar to the Eucharist we are about to partake together this very day. The difference here is that bread came down and nourished the Jews physically, but they still died. Jesus, our bread of salvation, came down from heaven and nourishes us spiritually and brings us to everlasting salvation. Amen! Over the centuries these events are all linked together and move in a predestined Divine plan towards the salvation of humanity.

So here we come back and circle to our issues and concerns we have been holding on to. I will give you a moment to take that back out and get ready. Ready for what you may wonder? Ready to give it away. Give it to God! In today's liturgy the gifts being brought up are being presented on your behalf as the parish's collective presentation of your lives: sacrifice, life, our joys, our sufferings, our failures, our successes. We are joining our lives to Jesus Christ in His sacrifice for us in the liturgy of the Eucharist. So, let each of us today take that issue or concern we have been holding on to and 'place it' with our collective offering of all of us. Let us, together as sisters and brothers, help carry each other's problems to Christ. For that IS what the family of God does – we support each other in Christ's love.

And here is the final step in the great letting go. As we empty a bit of ourselves to God and surrender that concern, that fear, that nagging issue it should help not only lift a burden from you but also take a little out of the baggage we each carry around. We are going to make some room today for God.

AFTER you receive communion I want you to pray to God. Pray that God will receive your gift you presented and take that burden from you. Then thank God, as we should always show our gratitude and thanks, for being a loving God that carries us when we are in need and feeds us when we need nourishment. Finally, ask God to work within you to fill that newly created space inside of you with the things that God wants of you. When we pray after communion it's the perfect and intimate time for us to commune with God. We are at the ultimate point of relationship with God. Open your hearts to the Lord. Let our healing and loving Creator in, and allow God's good works that have been waiting for you to enter your life, not as the nourishing mana from heaven but as the body and blood of Christ, your eternal nourishment.

AMEN