

Our Creator draws all things to a deeper intimacy.

19th Sunday in Ordinary Time – Year B

1 Kgs 19:4-8, Ps 34:2-3, 4-5, 6-7, 8-9, Eph 4:30–5:2, Jn 6:41-

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We hear in today's Gospel the third account in John's *Bread of Life* discourse. In our first reading, we come to understand that our deepest longing is fed by a reality beyond ourselves. Allow me to unpack that longing with a story.

A little over a year ago, Grandpa Henry lost his life partner of 60 some years. Without Martha, he was alone in ways that he had never experienced before. One Saturday morning his daughter Ella and granddaughter Jen came to visit. Jen was 7 and somewhat outspoken. In a lull between talk of school and soccer, Jen innocently asked, "Grandpa, do you miss grandma?" Her mother, who had been tidying up the kitchen, overheard and called out, "Jen!" Mom had said her name in such a way that she knew she had crossed some line.

Henry, waved his hand and said, "It's OK. Jen, come sit by me." She quietly sat down beside him. "Jen, do you remember when grandma died? That was before the vaccines. There was nothing that we could do." Jen nodded, remembering that no one could even see grandma in the hospital. "It was a difficult time for me, Jen. Your grandmother and I were close. She was special, the love of my life. She had strength of character and was not afraid to speak her mind." Grandpa smiled saying, "Jen, you are like your grandmother that way. You will grow to have her strength.

Your grandmother and I enjoyed traveling, friends, reading and new ideas. We could sit on the porch together for hours discussing a book or talking about family and the world. We enjoyed our time and walks together. Over the years, we grew together and our love deepened more than we could have imagined. We were husband and wife, but we were also best friends. We laughed together, long and often. She was sunlight dancing on my heart."

Do I miss grandma? Of course I do. If every day of our 60 some years were a note of music; then we wrote a symphony together. In loving each other, we touched something good and pure beyond ourselves. I still reach out in the night thinking she will be there beside me. She is beyond my physical touch, but not outside the reach of our love. So, I fall asleep knowing that I will see and be with her again.” Grandpa gave Jen a long hug. She felt the comfort of her grandfather’s arms around her, and somehow, her grandmother’s as well.

Like Elijah in our first reading, and Henry’s loss of Martha, life events sometimes take us into the desert. The desert experience can be numbing and disorienting but the desolation can be transforming. It is in the place of desolation that we open ourselves to receive the bread that fills our deepest hunger and longing. Sometimes, we need an angel with a sympathetic ear and word of encouragement so that we might find our footing. In life, compassion is the Sacred Bread we offer to those we meet along the way.

Not every relationship takes root and matures. Martha and Henry knew they shared something special. They drew from each other and were changed by their love. *Our Creator draws all things to a deeper intimacy.* If you hear nothing else from my remarks today, may it be that thought; *Our Creator draws all things to a deeper intimacy.* It is yours to sit and pray with at some point.

Henri Nouwen describes it this way, “*Something very deep and mysterious, very holy and sacred, is taking place in our lives right where we are, and the more attentive we become the more we will begin to see and hear it. The more our spiritual sensitivities come to the surface of our daily lives, the more we will discover—uncover—a new presence in our lives.*”

That presence, that Holy Spirit between Creator and created, is our Sacred Bread. For this reason, St Paul admonishes us, 'Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God. Put aside bitterness, fury, anger, and shouting. And be kind to one another, compassionate and forgiving.' Our joy is in recognizing God with us.

Having shared life with Martha, in his heart, Henry knew these things. The conversation he had with his granddaughter, Jen was about truth and life. The love of parents and grandparents will always touch family, instilling values and compassion for the generations that follow. In a responsibility beyond themselves, elders share the bread of their wisdom and love.

Henry and Martha's relationship was not based on a single day but a span of years. Our relationship to the Eucharist is not based on a single occasion but on all the moments of our life where we have known the Lord's quiet voice and presence.

Eucharist is an experience of love beyond understanding. It is the mystery of creation unfolding in a pattern of death and new life. With the laughter and trust of a child, we find ourselves immersed in that loving mystery.

Today, in the consecration of bread and wine, our Heavenly Father will touch us, inviting us to a greater intimacy in knowing his Son. His presence and embrace is the Bread of Life that feeds us.

References

All scripture quotations are taken from. (1987). *The New American Bible, Revised edition*. USCCB.

I welcome your questions and comments. My email is fsila@sttomskazoo.org. (n.d.).

Nouwen, F. H. (2021, August 6). *The Sacred and the Holy - Daily Meditations*.