

2021 August 08

Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Reading:

First: 1 Kings 19.4-8, "He went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights to Horeb, the mountain of God." (8)

The Psalm: 34, "O taste and see that the Lord is good." (8a)

Second: Ephesians 4.30-5.2, "Put away from you all bitterness, wrath and anger and wrangling and slander." (31)

The Gospel: John 6.41-51, "Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me." (45b)

Taught by the Father

Jesus refused to do miracles to keep the people engaged and happy. He also refused to give them free meal every day. That was reason enough for them to dispute with Jesus, question his origin, his ancestry, and even to deride him as one coming from poor lineage. They were finding excuses for refusing to receive from him the living and life-giving bread or receive him as the life-giver. And Jesus rightly comments about them that they were not called and taught by the Father. Yes, Father must be the teacher.

This lesson is true for the heavenly Father and the earthly ones. Unless the father teaches, the children will not know life's lessons and to that extent they will not have life. How many of our growing children know that Jesus is the life-giving bread for them? How many of our parents, the fathers and mothers of these children, take the time and trouble to tell them who Jesus is, and what he does to them and to us? If the earthly fathers and mothers refuse to team up with the heavenly Father to teach these to their children, he (heavenly Father) will be helpless to draw them closer to Jesus and to that extent Jesus will be incapable to give them the living and life-giving bread.

When the priest or the communion minister says, 'The Body of Christ', how many of our youngsters understand it as such, or as just a wafer? Somebody should take the time and trouble to tell them again and again that it is the body of Christ, it is the bread that comes down from heaven, it is the bread of life Jesus gives to groom and prepare us for the life in heaven, that it is Jesus himself coming into us. The parents are the best teachers to tell them this. They themselves must be aware of Jesus in the communion, and their communication to the young ones should come from this awareness.

It is not easy to grasp and make other humans to understand this mystery. Jesus himself took long discourses again and again to communicate it to his disciples and to his listeners. Many of them could not swallow this teaching, and so they departed from him. This food of the soul Jesus offered fell short of their expectation of free daily food for the body. The living and life-giving bread should be allowed to transform us who eat it. Faith in the words of Jesus alone can enable us for it. When that happens, we may have glimpses of the experience of Elijah who ran for forty days and nights with the bread brought by the angel. This transforming bread should make us the "beloved children of God to live in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God." (Ephesians 5.1b-2) Each of us must be transformed into the Body of Christ and become a sacrificial offering for the redemption of our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ. That is our baptismal call!

Fr. George