



## *Thoughts on the Journey...*

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Nearly every day of her high school years, she left the house in her Catholic school uniform with a smile on her face, beautifully styled hair, and great disposition, determined to have a good day as the door closed behind her. She was positive and hopeful as each new day began. However, coming home from school was often a different matter. As a mother, I sensed the let-down, by the way the front door opened. Often I could hear a faint talking to herself in the front foyer as she reviewed the events of the day in her mind. It was the same issue that plagued her and other kids who were not accepted as part of the in-crowd. It was just hard for her to wrap her head around the idea that the *popular* girls at school did not accept her. The harder she tried, the more hurtful that circle of girls became and the worse she felt about herself. We had many talks about building friendships with people who treat you with respect instead of working so hard to win their attention.

At first, I thought my daughter was exaggerating the situation because I found it hard to believe that people could be so petty and cruel, until I witnessed it myself. As a Junior, her class was responsible for decorating the school gym for the prom. Students and parents alike were expected to pitch in and transform the space from an ordinary gym to a beautiful venue. It didn't take long to figure out the 'ins' from the 'outs'. The kids who didn't measure up were working hard and the popular kids were gathered together whispering and murmuring among themselves with an occasional burst of laughter, sowing seeds of discontent. It was a sobering scene for me as I thought about the homespun advice I was giving my daughter during her first few years of high school. The situation was far worse than I imagined as I witnessed the blatant way they dismissed some classmates and showed an overall disrespect to others. I don't know why I was shocked by the behavior; I had also seen it among some of the parents who murmured among themselves at school events and created an exclusive barrier between the *have's* and the *have not's*.

My protective motherly instincts were battling with what I knew my Father in heaven expected from us as believers in His Son.

In the Gospel of John this week, we continue with the Bread of Life Discourse. The scene opens with the Jews in conflict with Jesus because Jesus said, "*I am the bread come down from heaven*". These people have witnessed the healing miracles, they heard Jesus teach the Hebrew scriptures, they listened to the pro-

found things he was teaching about life, eternity, his Father, and himself and yet their preconceived notions and opinions about Jesus were already well formed, dismissing the obvious. They were blinded to the truth and limited by their bias and prejudices. In their minds, this ordinary carpenter's kid couldn't be who he suggests he is! The essence of everything that Jesus said and did were of the divine! And yet, these small-minded people, who thought they knew all there is to know about God, gathered in a cluster and stirred doubt and suspicion among the people. Their close mindedness blinded them to the very Messiah standing before them.

Frustrated with the lot of them, Jesus says, **"Stop murmuring among yourselves. No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draw him, and I will raise him on the last day."**

Here, Jesus is delivering to them the path to his Father and they are so focused on their agenda and so locked in their ignorance, that they are missing the opportunity to know who God the Father is through his Son Jesus.

Humanity has a tendency to box notions of who people are and close the lid. We do the same thing with God. We think we know him and we never go beyond our own limited understanding. Jesus' message is clear: if you want to know my Father, believe and trust in the *bread of life*. We may spend our entire lives overlooking something of tremendous value because we are simply viewing the surface of our surroundings. The same is true of the Eucharist and of the truth of who God is. Sometimes we want God to be who we want him to be and we miss the opportunity to truly know him.

Like my daughter who wanted so badly to be accepted by people who put her (and themselves) in a box, it wasn't until she let go of her notion of who they were that she was free to appreciate who she was. The same is true of God. We have to continually keep ourselves open in dialogue with our Lord who will lead us outside of ourselves. Instead of murmuring in closed circles about who we and others think God is, remember, it is God who teaches us about himself if we seek him in truth. Don't be afraid of trusting and believing in the One who will carry us on a straight path to the Father.