

## **Homily for the Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B:**

### **Theme: Bread for the Journey**

This is the third Sunday that we're focusing on John 6, and now we're actually moving into the "Bread of Life" discourse proper. We looked at Jesus' feeding of the 5,000 two Sundays ago, and then last Sunday we looked at some of the exchange between Jesus and the crowds that led to his "Bread of Life" discourse when they asked him to give them the new manna forever always. Now, we're actually looking at what he has to say about this new manna, about this bread from heaven. Now he's beginning to use the manna to reveal two mysteries: the mystery of his divinity, of his heavenly origin as the bread of life come in person, and also the mystery of the sacrament of the Eucharist, the mystery of his real presence in the bread and the wine of the Lord's Supper.

Jesus is pointing out the primacy of grace - "no one can come to me unless the Father draws him." In the Bread of Life discourse, he's very clear, he says the bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh. And, when we come back the Sunday after the Solemnity of Assumption, we're going to see how the Jews react to that claim and how they object to him saying that he will in fact give them his flesh to eat. (some disciples abandon him, he doesn't try to justify himself; he even turns to the 12 disciples and asks them if they too want to leave....He is the bread of life which gives life and sustains)

In today's first reading, we meet the prophet Elijah in, in a pitiful state. He can't take it anymore; he's had enough. It is clear that he's feeling overwhelmed and desperate, and we can understand why.... Jezebel has learned that Elijah killed the priests of Baal, and she threatens to do the same to him. Elijah flees for his life to the wilderness where we find him under a solitary broom tree. He feels desperate, alone and overwhelmed. And so, alone in his desperation he lifts up his voice and cries: "It is enough, Lord!"

Perhaps you have traveled this road before. Perhaps, like Elijah, you've found yourself in the wilderness, feeling alone and overwhelmed and desperate: wilderness of grief; maybe it's the wilderness of illness or addiction, maybe it's the wilderness of stress – from deadline, bills piling up; marriage falling apart; maybe yours is the wilderness of unanswered prayer intentions or even the wilderness of despair.

In the case of Elijah, when the prophet sits under that solitary broom tree and cries out, God sends an angel with bread for the journey. Elijah goes in the strength of that food 40 days and 40 nights. That bread sustains him on his journey until Mount Horeb, where he meets God again.

Jesus is reminding us today: "I am the bread which came down from heaven." Remember, the angel of the Lord brought bread from heaven to the prophet Elijah but he wasn't the bread. But in our own times Jesus is reminding us: I am both the gift and the giver. What a blessing!

Are you in dire need of bread for the journey? Are you desperate? Overwhelmed by life's concerns? Are you feeling alone? Go to Jesus. Eat what Jesus has provided for us. He is both the gift and the giver. He is the best bread for the journey we can ever have or think of.

St. Paul in the second reading mentions the fruits of communing in the bread of life: kindness to one another, compassionate, forgiving one another. He reminds us that whatever Jesus has given us is nothing but a sacrifice. He made this sacrifice that we may never live-in despair; never to feel lonely or even to feel overwhelmed by life's concerns. Never hesitate to go Jesus the bread of life.