

When the Israelite community wandered in the desert, they grumbled: “If only we had died at the LORD’s hand in the land of Egypt, as we sat by our kettles of meat and ate our fill of bread! But you have led us into this wilderness to make this whole assembly die of famine!” (Ex 16:3) There is a sad element of our human nature that finds fault with the gifts that God gives us.

God sent his Son that we might have eternal life, that we might know the depths of God’s love for us, that we might hear the truth and be set free by it. The Jews murmured about Jesus because he said, “I am the bread that came down from heaven” (Jn 6:41). Jesus recognizes their hardened hearts ... and he will experience utter rejection on Good Friday, when he is condemned to death by the crowds ... no longer murmuring, but crying out aloud, “Crucify him, crucify him” (Jn 19:6).

“Today we see that the Church, the body of Christ, is wounded by division and discord... It is very painful to read sometimes ... Catholics writing against the pope, writing against the Church, as though they are not Catholics. That is very painful. And if the Church is the body of Christ, then the body of Christ is wounded by division, by discord.”ⁱ As with the church so to with the world.

The pandemic has shown the great injustice of poverty around the world. In the United States, people grumble against the government over the wearing of masks and the taking of vaccines. In Haiti, and other impoverished areas of the world, the poor die because there is no vaccine to be had, no oxygen for those struggling to breathe. Where politicians fail to provide for the common good, the poor suffer and die in far greater numbers.

Were today not a Sunday, we would celebrate the Memorial of Saint Dominic, the founder of the Dominican Order of Preachers, who died in the year 1221. The people grumbled and murmured in his era as well. Dominic responded by personal sacrifice. Moved with compassion for the great numbers of the poor “who were suffering and dying during a severe famine, Dominic sold his precious books and, with exemplary kindness established a center for almsgiving where the poor could be fed.”ⁱⁱ As a priest, he preached the Gospel of God’s merciful love. The truth sets us free. Christ redeems us.

In our fallen human nature, we would rather murmur and grumble and find fault. Jesus responds to our sin and division. “I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world” (Jn 6:51). “The food that gives immortality is an allusion to the tree of life in the garden of Eden. According to Genesis, the tree of life’s fruit could give immortality. After their sin, God expelled Adam and Eve from Eden to keep them from eating this food (Gen 3:22–23). Now Jesus says that anyone who eats the bread he gives will live forever. Jesus opens the way to paradise and offers the food that gives immortality.”ⁱⁱⁱ

In Holy Communion, Jesus offers himself to us. “Once crucified and transformed by the resurrection, Jesus’ human flesh becomes the source of eternal life for the whole world. It is Jesus’ own flesh that people must eat.”^{iv} Jesus is the Bread of Life that comes down from heaven. He asks us to reconcile with him before we approach the altar. Where there is grave sin, sacramental confession is necessary. Jesus suffered and died for us that we might be set free from sin. We must acknowledge that sin. We must truthfully confront our own faults and failures, our murmuring and grumbling. For our venial sins, we seek forgiveness in the Mass itself time and again calling upon the Lord’s mercy for our smaller offences. As God forgive us, we must forgive others with our whole heart. True forgiveness silences the murmuring.

God offers us the Bread of life that our hearts and minds may be transformed. As we receive this foretaste of the heavenly banquet, God calls us to serve others with the heart of

Christ. “Grant us the grace to find all our joy in wanting You alone, in desiring You alone, and in thinking of You alone. Grant that by denying of ourselves always and in all things, we may find light and life in obeying Your good, acceptable and perfect Will.”^v

Elijah was ready to die, and he would have were it not for the saving grace of God. “He got up, ate, and drank; then strengthened by that food, he walked forty days and forty nights to the mountain of God, Horeb” (1 Kgs 19:8). Jesus invites us to eat the bread of life, not that we are worthy, but that we may be strengthened to serve God and our neighbor.

- Behold the Bread of Life, behold him who takes away the sins of the world. “Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.
- Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.” (Roman Missal).

ⁱ catholicnewsagency.com/news/248607/dominican-leader-st-dominic-can-teach-catholics-how-to-overcome-divisions-800-years-after-death

ⁱⁱ op.org/praedicator-gratiae-letter-of-the-holy-father-to-the-master-of-the-order-of-preachers-for-the-8th-centenary-of-the-death-of-st-dominic-of-caleruega/

ⁱⁱⁱ Martin, Francis; Wright, William M. IV. The Gospel of John. Pg. 128.

^{iv} Ibid.

^v Prayer of Peter Julian Eymard. (See acfp2000.com/Trinity.html).