

August 12, 2018 - 19th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Our First Reading and the Gospel today continue the Bread of Life theme that we began two weeks ago.

To put the First Reading into some context, Elijah had just had his most successful encounter with the enemies of the Lord. He had challenged the priests of Baal to a contest on Mount Carmel. And he won. You would think it would be a most joyous time for the prophet.

Instead, maybe in retaliation, Queen Jezebel sought to capture Elijah and put him to death. That is where the passage from the 1st Book of Kings picks up. The prophet was at the end of his rope. He had taken refuge in the wilderness, but thirst and hunger brought him to the brink of starvation and death.

Elijah cries out “This is enough O Lord. Take my life...”

Search your prayer books; comb through all the novenas and chaplets and I don't think you will find a prayer like that one.

After praying, Elijah lays down, perhaps hoping never to awaken. But prophets and those who love God don't get off so easily.

Elijah had hardly gotten to sleep before God's messenger shook him awake. The angel delivers food and water and not-so-gently bids Elijah to eat and drink because he has a divine appointment to keep. Renewed in mind and body by this food Elijah journeys to Horeb "the mountain of God".

There are many times in our lives when we may feel discouraged and disillusioned like Elijah.

Things may not be going well on the home front, or at our place of employment, or maybe we can't find work. Maybe you are dealing with physical or emotional challenges. Sometimes, we want to escape to the broom tree and just lie down.

Elijah's story invites us to ponder both how to pray and how God responds to our prayer.

Elijah shows us, that there is no sentiment we need hold back in prayer. He also cautions us that God will never settle for less, than all we can become.

The deliverance given to Elijah does not mean that God always solves our problems. Elijah will have further challenges. God delivers us by always being with us, feeding us, sustaining us, and never abandoning us.

This is the message Jesus tried to convey to his companions as he described himself as the bread that comes from heaven. According to Jesus, the bread from heaven is God's offer of a life more abundant than we could ever imagine.

The people who murmured couldn't or wouldn't fathom the idea that God could work through one of them.

This Jesus cannot have come down from heaven, because everyone knows where he lived and who his mother and father were. “He came from down the street, not down from heaven.”

Their refusal to accept Jesus as coming from God, betrayed their lack of faith in the value and potential of their own lives.

We must not make the same mistake.

In Baptism and Confirmation, we are sealed for the day of redemption as St Paul reminds the Ephesians.

Paul tells us to remove all bitterness, fury, anger, shouting, reviling, and malice. (Paul obviously never had to drive down 270 during rush hour).

Notwithstanding that, we know that in accepting Jesus as our Lord and Savior, and in our active, regular, participation in the sacramental life of the Church we are strengthened for our journey in this life.

That journey for each one of us must be to make Jesus the most important thing in our life, every day and every hour? How?

--by loving God and our neighbor.

--by loving even our enemy

--by working for justice and peace in our community, our nation,
and our world.

--by being a voice for the voiceless

--by being good stewards of God's creation

--by feeding the hungry. Doing what a number of our young people
did recently when they participated in I-Serve, going out to various
organizations that serve our neighbors in need.

The readings today make it clear that God nourishes and sustains us to do
his work in this world.

The more we take and eat of the bread of life, the deeper we are drawn
into Christ's life and to his way of life: that of caring, serving, forgiving,
trusting, and, most of all, loving.

One of the great mysteries of the life of faith is that we only gain by giving.

If we choose to sit at the table of the Lord and share in his life, then we are consenting to be the Body of Christ at work in the world, at the service of “saving” rather than “condemning” and healing instead of harming.

Dinah and I took a couple of nature walks, if you will, this week. After all the rain the power and the glory of nature are apparent everywhere. The trees grow and grow up toward the light. Plants and wildflowers thrive. We had more than a few deer sightings. Insects are crawling and birds flying.

But even more than the power of nature, is the power that Jesus speaks about, that draws all of us to him, and to the Father, and at the same time to one another.

After the meal, there is a journey to be taken, of days and miles and opportunities. We will be given what we need to take this journey, but it is up to us to start walking.