

## Weekend Readings & Reflections

### August 8-9, 2021 – 19<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time

*Reflection:* Sometimes we feel like Elijah in today's First Reading. We want to lie down and die, keenly aware of our failures - that we seem to be getting no better at doing what God wants of us. We can be tempted to despair, as the prophet was on his forty-day journey in the desert. We can be tempted to "murmur" against God, as the Israelites did during their forty years in the desert (see [Exodus 16:2, 7, 8](#); [1 Corinthians 10:10](#)). The Gospel today uses the same word, "murmur," to describe the crowds, who reenact Israel's hardheartedness in the desert. Jesus tells them that prophecies are being fulfilled in Him, that they are being taught by God. But they can't believe it. They can only see His flesh, that He is the "son" of Joseph and Mary. Yet if we believe, if we seek Him in our distress, He will deliver us from our fears, as we sing in today's Psalm. At the altar in every Eucharist, the angel of the Lord, the Lord himself (see [Exodus 3:1-2](#)), touches us. He commands us to take and eat His Flesh given for the life of the world (see [Matthew 26:26](#)). This taste of the heavenly gift (see [Hebrews 6:4-5](#)) comes to us with a renewed command—to get up and continue on the journey we began in Baptism to the mountain of God, the kingdom of heaven. He will give us the bread of life, the strength and grace we need—as He fed our spiritual ancestors in the wilderness and Elijah in the desert. So let us stop grieving the Spirit of God, as Paul says in today's Epistle, in another reference to Israel in the desert (see [Isaiah 63:10](#)). Let us say to God as Elijah did, "Take my life." Not in the sense of wanting to die but in giving ourselves as a sacrificial offering—loving Him as He has loved us, on the Cross and in the Eucharist.



### OPENING PRAYER

**Leader:** Welcome to our study on the Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time. Let us pray together the Angelus:

**Leader:** The Angel of the Lord declared unto Mary.

**All:** And she conceived of the Holy Spirit. *Hail Mary...*

**Leader:** Behold the handmaid of the Lord.

**All:** Be it done unto me according to thy word. *Hail Mary...*

**Leader:** And the Word was made Flesh.

**All:** And dwelt among us. *Hail Mary...*

**Leader:** Pray for us, O holy Mother of God.

**All:** That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ

**Leader:** Let us Pray: Pour forth, we beseech Thee, O Lord, Thy grace into our hearts, that we to whom the Incarnation of Christ Thy Son was made known by the message of an angel, may by His Passion and Cross be brought to the glory of His Resurrection. Through the same Christ Our Lord. Amen.

**Leader:** Jesus told us at the end of Matthew's Gospel that he would "be with us always, to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20) Today, we hear how Jesus planned to be with us always through both the Holy Spirit and the Eucharist. Do we recognize him Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity—as we gaze upon the small host and chalice on the Altar?

#### Digging Deeper: A Prayer After Communion

It is easy to become distracted after we receive Communion on Sunday as we watch for friends and pay attention to people's Sunday style. However, this is a profoundly intimate time with Jesus. We should give him all our attention and reverence to him during the time that he is in our hearts. Here is a prayer you can pray as you focus your heart on him. It is called the *Anima Christi* and was written by St. Ignatius of Loyola: "Soul of Christ, sanctify me. Body of Christ, save me. Blood of Christ, inebriate me. Water from the side of Christ, wash me. Passion of Christ, strengthen me. O good Jesus, hear me. Within your wounds hide me. Never permit me to be separated from You. From the evil one defend me. At the hour of my death call me, and bid me to come to Thee, that with the Saints and the Angels, I may praise Thee Forever and ever. Amen."

(Play the video on [FORMED.org](#) - [Opening the Word – 19th Sunday in Ordinary Time \(Year B\)](#))

## FIRST READING ~ 1 Kings 19:4-8 ~

Elijah went a day's journey into the desert, until he came to a broom tree and sat beneath it. He prayed for death saying: "This is enough, O LORD! Take my life, for I am no better than my fathers." He lay down and fell asleep under the broom tree, but then an angel touched him and ordered him to get up and eat. Elijah looked and there at his head was a hearth cake and a jug of water. After he ate and drank, he lay down again, but the angel of the LORD came back a second time, touched him, and ordered, "Get up and eat, else the journey will be too long for you!" He got up, ate, and drank; then strengthened by that food, he walked forty days and forty nights to the mountain of God, Horeb.

The continuing theme of being 'fed by God' is developed in the readings this week. Elijah sits exhausted under a tree in the desert. He is being hunted down by Princess Jezebel who was married to the King of Israel. She tried to replace all prophets and temples of Yahweh by importing 450 prophets and followers of Baal from her homeland in Sidon. Elijah has just killed them all and is now on the run! (see 1Kings 18, 19-46).

- Have you ever got into difficulty as a result of obedience to God? Have you ever said to God: 'this is enough'? Is there any painful purifying of the Church that you find particularly difficult to participate in and endure?

God encourages Elijah not to focus upon his own pain and fear. God wants to offer food and strength for the 40-day journey ahead.

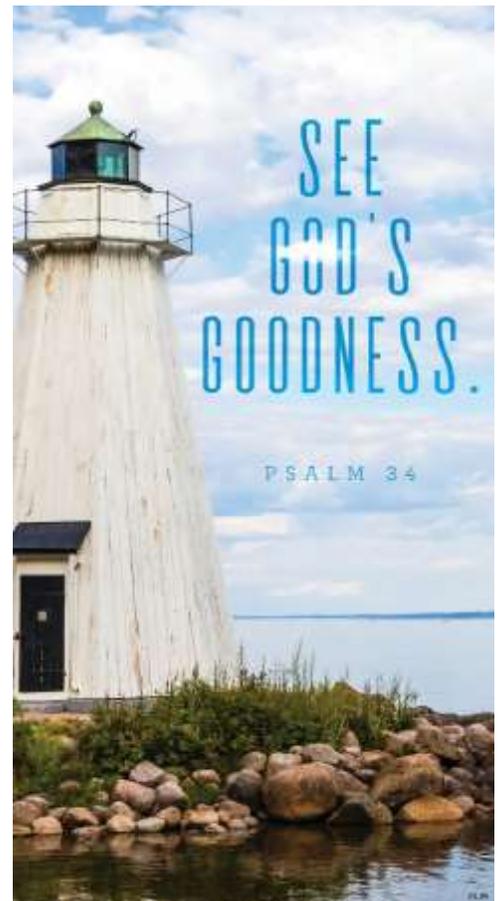
- Do you tend to focus on your own pain and mumble and groan? How could you develop a habit of being open to help and 'being fed'?
- God wishes us to move from simply surviving to thriving. If you were to ask God or someone for help, what would be your question in one sentence? How could you grow your hunger so you experience being 'fed' with scripture and the Eucharist?

## SECOND READING ~ 2 Ephesians 4:30-5:2 ~

Brothers and sisters: Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with which you were sealed for the day of redemption. All bitterness, fury, anger, shouting, and reviling must be removed from you, along with all malice. And be kind to one another, compassionate, forgiving one another as God has forgiven you in Christ. So be imitators of God, as beloved children, and live in love, as Christ loved us and handed himself over for us as a sacrificial offering to God for a fragrant aroma.

St Paul teaches that we were 'sealed' at our Baptism. A 'seal' was a special jewel or stone or metal cylinder marked with a sign and pressed upon clay or wax or object. The mark - seal indicated the owners signature, ownership, authority on a legal document or object. The link between the person and / or object was now displayed to the world. As sealed people we are to witness to whom we belong. Paul inserts attributes displaying God; kindness, compassion, forgiveness.

- Are you conscious of being sealed? Is there any anger or bitterness the spirit would like you to let go of so as not to grieve the spirit dwelling in you?



## **GOSPEL** ~ John 6:41-51~

The Jews murmured about Jesus because he said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven," and they said, "Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph? Do we not know his father and mother? Then how can he say, 'I have come down from heaven?'" Jesus answered and said to them, "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. It is written in the prophets: They shall all be taught by God. Everyone who listens to my Father and learns from him comes to me. Not that anyone has seen the Father except the one who is from God; he has seen the Father. Amen, amen, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your ancestors ate the manna in the desert, but they died; this is the bread that comes down from heaven so that one may eat it and not die. 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."

**Jewish people often referred to their laws as 'bread from heaven'. Their laws and teachings from Moses gave them life and revealed God to them. They grumble and murmur at Jesus' claim: I am the bread that comes down from Heaven. Hidden within this phrase Jesus is claiming the Divine Name I AM and to replace the law. He teaches further that he is true life-giving bread but that bread will now be replaced with flesh. John presents clearly the levels of meaning: Bread. Jesus. Flesh.**

- **Can you see in this text of John 6 the threads of our belief that in the Eucharist / Mass it is truly the flesh of Jesus we receive? Do you recognize the invitation following reception of Jesus to now become life-for-the-world?**

**The only way God can be truly revealed is someone must come from God and live among us. This is indeed the great religious hope of the Jewish people. However, they become satisfied with the laws of God and were not ready to accept the person of God. Jesus claims he is this person truly from God, has seen God. This is the claim of Christianity that sets us apart from other world religions. Because Jesus is divine - God - among - us what he promises to give us - his flesh and blood - he can and will do.**

- **As we approach the end of 5 weeks of teaching on the Eucharist consider prayerfully reading John 6. How would you explain the Eucharist now in your own words?**

## MEDITATION

God offers his people abundant life, but we can miss it. What is the *bread of life* which Jesus offers? It is first of all the life of God himself - life which sustains us not only now in this age but also in the age to come. The Rabbis said that *the generation in the wilderness have no part in the life to come*. In the Book of Numbers, it is recorded that the people who refused to brave the dangers of the promised land were condemned to wander in the wilderness until they died. The Rabbis believed that the father who missed the promised land also missed the life to come. God sustained the Israelites in the wilderness with manna from heaven. This bread foreshadowed the true heavenly bread which Jesus would offer his followers. Jesus makes a claim only God can make: He is the *true bread of heaven* that can satisfy the deepest hunger we experience. The manna from heaven prefigured the superabundance of the unique bread of the Eucharist or Lord's Supper which Jesus gave to his disciples on the eve of his sacrifice. The manna in the wilderness sustained the Israelites on their journey to the Promised Land. It could not produce eternal life for the Israelites. The bread which Jesus offers his disciples sustains us not only on our journey to the heavenly paradise, it gives us the abundant supernatural life of God which sustains us for all eternity. When we receive from the Lord's table we unite ourselves to Jesus Christ, who makes us sharers in his body and blood and partakers of his divine life. This supernatural food is healing for both body and soul and strength for our journey heavenward. Jesus offers us the abundant supernatural life of heaven itself - but we can miss it or even refuse it. To refuse Jesus is to refuse eternal life, unending life with the Heavenly Father. To accept Jesus as the *bread of heaven* is not only life and spiritual nourishment for this world but glory in the world to come.

- **When you approach the Table of the Lord, what do you expect to receive? Healing, pardon, comfort, and rest for your soul? Do you hunger for the "bread of life"?**

## CLOSING PRAYER

**Leader:** In closing, let us now pray ...

**ALL:** Lord Jesus, you are the *living bread* which sustains me in this life. May I always hunger for the *bread which comes from heaven* and find in it the nourishment and strength I need to love and serve you wholeheartedly. May I always live in the joy, peace, and unity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, both now and in the age to come. Amen.

**Leader:** (if time, let us offer up our intercessions ... St. Michael... Our Father... Hail Mary... Glory Be...)

---

[Opening reflection was shared from St. Paul Center at <https://stpaulcenter.com/studies-tools/sunday-bible-reflections>]

[video can be found at FORMED.ORG "Opening the Word". Additional reflections can be found at FORMED in "Opening the Word"]

[Discussion questions created by Fr Frank Bird sm, Marist Priest, and distributed by [www.maristlaitynz.org](http://www.maristlaitynz.org), were shared with permission from [www.livingtheword.org.nz](http://www.livingtheword.org.nz).]

[Today's readings come from the New American Bible, Revised Edition (NABRE) and were copied from the USCCB website: <http://www.usccb.org/bible/index.cfm>]

[Meditation is copyright © 2021 Servants of the Word, source: <https://dailyscripture.net>, author Don Schwager ]