

19<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Sunday  
August 8, 2021  
“Food for the Journey”

1 Kg 19:4-8  
Eph 4:30 - 5:2  
Jn 6:41-51

My Brothers and Sisters in the Lord –

Whenever we go on a journey, we must be sure that we have enough food to sustain us. It's not much of a problem for travelers these days in America – because most people can stop almost anywhere and buy something to eat. But it wasn't always this way a few generations ago. And, even today, if someone starts out on a wilderness trek, they must be sure to pack enough food – or they could find themselves in a life-threatening situation.

Spiritual journeys are no different. Every human being is on a spiritual journey. Yet, sadly, far too many don't realize it. Yet, even if they do, they don't understand that they will need spiritual nourishment along the way. Moreover, when they are at a loss, spiritually – When they decide to give up – They don't realize that hardship, doubt, and even despair are part of the journey itself.

The prophet Elijah thought that he knew what his journey through life would be. God had called him to be one of the greatest of prophets. He was to admonish the Chosen People and their king. He was to get them to reject their false gods and their pagan ways. He was to bring them back to the Lord God and to God's ways.

But, sadly, he failed. He failed even after working marvelous signs and wonders. Then, suddenly, he had to flee for his life. So, he ran away to the wilderness, but without food or water – Facing a hopeless situation, he gave up. He asked God to let him die, because he was so helpless and miserable. He asked for death, even though he had no knowledge of any life after death!

It was then that God intervened. An angel brought Elijah a miraculous food and drink. He was told to eat and drink twice – and he was sustained for the whole journey of 40 days and nights! Elijah's journey continued to Mt. Horeb, to Mt. Sinai. There, he encountered God in a new and surprising way – and he was told how he should proceed in the future.

In St. John's Gospel, the crowd had sought Jesus for more material food, when that was not what they really needed. Like so many today, the people took their spiritual life and journey for granted. They, probably, never thought much about it – so caught up were they in their ordinary daily lives. They kept the Jewish observances – They went to the synagogue and to the Temple – But they wanted a better life here – a better material journey. Above all, they wanted to be free from the Romans.

When Jesus came, he brought a wonderful teaching and message. The disciples hung on his every word. But the masses were impatient. They didn't understand that Jesus was trying to get them to take their spiritual journey seriously. Jesus even had a way to make that journey easier for them. He would provide them with a spiritual food and drink that would nourish and sustain them!

Today, Jesus reveals to them that there is a spiritual realm – and that he came from that realm. Yes, he was born of Joseph and Mary – Yes, they knew his human origins and background. But Jesus came from God – He came from the Father – Jesus came from Heaven!

Then Jesus further informed them that they had to be open to God. They must truly listen to the Father – They were to learn from the Father – Only then could they begin to understand all that Jesus was – and be able to accept all that Jesus had to say.

Jesus came to reveal that life is more than a journey from birth to death. Life is a journey wherein we must use everything here in a way that enables us to enter a life that will never end!

We are called by God – We each have something that only we can do. We must live our life with God and in the ways of God. However, we can't do it on our own – for we will need help.

There will be times when we want to quit – Times when we can go no further – Times when we are tempted to take an easier way – a material way – a more economically rewarding way – a politically correct way. We might even be tempted to quit the path we are on and start on another journey altogether. But we would be wrong.

Instead, we need to stay with Jesus, our brother. We must walk with him and be nourished by the bread of his presence – the bread of his words – the bread of the Eucharist – in the community of disciples wherein he also resides! This bread, which is Jesus, will nourish us and sustain us no matter where we find ourselves or where we are called to go!

Brothers and Sisters, if we stay close to God – if we listen to God – if we go to Jesus – there will always be food for our, most important, spiritual journey. Sometimes it will come only when all seems hopeless and lost – But it will come in some form.

Let us pray that we never give up and that we accept God's bread and grace however it comes in Jesus!

Amen.

August 8, 2021

Msgr. Russell G. Terra