

## St Pius & St Anthony 19<sup>th</sup> Sunday Ordinary Time Year B2

Years ago, I had a dog named Simonetta, and I got her when she was a six week old puppy, from a retired truck driver in Tennessee (*he claimed truck drivers loved the breed-she was a miniature pinscher-very vigilant watchdog with a quick growl and show of teeth that might be a deterrent to someone opening the truck door while idling at a truck stop*). She was a great traveling dog with me. And early on just after I got her (way back when), I was visiting a friend and her family, and while my friend was holding my dog, her dad asked, “What kind is that? Where is that dog from?” She said, “From Germany-it is a Pinscher-a Miniature.” And he came back really quick and dismissively, “**That** dog is not from Germany” to which she clarified, “Of course, not this one, but *the breed* originated in Germany bred to be ‘small ratters to keep rodents out of carriages & stables’. Obviously, there was a confusion of terms in their conversation, & two lines of cross-talk, missing each other’s point.

Reminds me of the old joke, too, of the mailman who was about to enter a fenced yard to deliver mail to the porch and seeing a man on the swing, he called out, “Sir, does your dog bite?” The man called back, “No, sir, he doesn’t bite.” So, the mailman pushed open the gate and a dog charged him and bit into his leg. “What gives?” the mailman yelled out, “You said your dog doesn’t bite!” The man in the swing said back, “My dog doesn’t, **but that is not my dog!**”

A similar sounding conversation is happening in today’s gospel. Jesus tells the crowd, “I am the bread that came down from heaven” (6:41) And some detractors in the crowd aren’t having it. They say, “No, stop right there, you are not –you are not **from heaven.**’ (This is the first objection of this crowd-we will hear another dismissive question next week, and then one more the week after that). Their excuse for rejecting Jesus’ statement is pretty simple and literalistic of them. They basically say “You can’t be from heaven because we know your homeplace and your parents- it’s Nazareth-not heaven!” Again, their objection misses His point – he is not concerned about giving them His mailing address – No, He is teaching them about the lifegiving meaning that His sacrificial death accomplishes for them- and His eternal presence to us always-His body and blood-in the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist!

But some in the crowd, grumbling under their breath, they do dismiss Jesus saying, “How does this guy claim to be bread **from heaven**’ -we know his origin-his roots---Nazareth, like Joseph and Mary-Not heaven?” They do not understand His point. Yet we can, and we do both hear and affirm Jesus and them. Both things are true – Yes, Jesus was born in Bethlehem, raised in Nazareth, but He also came from God in heaven to save us. To get into our human world, God used a human entrance. Jesus, as fully human and fully divine, entered our world at a

particular place -Bethlehem, yet at the same time was sent here to us **from** the Heavenly Father's right hand.

The crowd is just getting tangled up in their limiting concepts. And that may be the cautionary message for us today. Do we miss out on a lot of what God is doing, saying to us, because of our own preconceived earth-bound, simple notions, like our familiar words, our favored positions or convenient concepts that we can't grow out of or get beyond. Jesus wants to expand or broaden our experience of Him. There is more to know about Jesus' identity, than just His mailing address. We have to look through the words He uses, to see the meaning behind them. I suspect strongly that this is exactly what Jesus was teaching Nicodemus back in John chapter 3:3 when Jesus told him, "To see the kingdom of God you must be **born from above.**" We must be upwardly directed, we must be open to above, and not presumptuously push our own concepts on to reality, forcing things to mean what only benefits/serves us best. The crowd doesn't seem open. They don't seem willing to hear Jesus' expansive worldview or the new dimensions His words suggest. I love the quote from Old Testament that Jesus slips into this dialogue here, in John 6:45. Jesus quotes the prophet Isaiah who prophesied the coming day when *everyone*, "*they all shall be taught by God.*" What is that about, but basically the same thing Jesus will say at the Last Supper when the disciples seem puzzled about all that He says will be coming next. Jesus let them know saying that, "***the Spirit of truth***, (*that He will send*) ***will guide you into all truth***" (Jn 16:13) (& adding in John 14:26 "He will teach you everything").

This whole story may come down to the crowd just not being willing to accept Jesus, to work with his words or seek to understand the 'New Life' and new covenant He was offering. Jesus is 'living Bread' for us to receive. I think Jesus is trying to stir up this 'soul nourishment' or life within us (to spark an inner light) in His listeners. Yet, they aren't receptive yet.

There's at least two other times in John's gospel, where people in a crowd reject Jesus, like this time here, based on supposedly 'knowing Him-where and Who He is from'. They are wrong, yet try justifying their rejection by saying, "*We know Moses, We trust Abraham, and you are not them.....*"

Yet, Jesus' heavenly origin indicates His kinship with Moses & Abraham, and if the crowd will more closely listen to Jesus' words, then that would confirm their true kinship with Jesus, Moses, Abraham, and everyone else 'born of the Spirit' In John 8:39-40, Jesus confronts the crowd on their refusal to hear God's voice (& missing God's visit to them), when He says, "*If you were Abraham's children, you would be doing the works of Abraham. But now you are trying to kill me.....*"

*Abraham did not do this” And also in John 5:46, Jesus says “if you had believed Moses, you would believe me, because He wrote about me.”*

I hear Jesus saying, “If you truly were, seekers after God’s ways, and really knew Moses, really knew Abraham, you would know me to .... we bring the same teaching of the Spirit to you (*‘they shall all be taught by God’*). This is profound, revealing a common spiritual kinship among all true seekers. Jesus is talking about a perennial philosophy, a universal path to truth available to all inquiring hearts that feeds all souls. That is the ‘living bread’ that Jesus is, that ‘that gives life to the world!’”(John 6:51) Jesus intends to draw all people to Himself (John 12:32) - if only they can ‘sync’ their hearts to his rhythm, attuning themselves to hear His voice. We do just that, ourselves with every reception of Holy Communion, our soul’s bread offered to us in every Mass, and how thankful we are to accept Him.