

## **19th Sunday in Ordinary Time**

Each week when we gather to celebrate the Eucharist, we each come to renew our covenant with God as well as deepen our communion with one another. We come to seek God's mercy and forgiveness for our failings and ask for his help to remain steadfast in faith in all situations of life. In this Sunday's liturgy our readings teach us to see God as our sole provider and sustainer. The readings speak about God as our help and refuge. They talk about how the Lord comes to our aid to defend us and free us from our foes and fears.

In the first reading, God aided the prophet Elijah in his time of need. Elijah was on the run for his life because Queen Jezebel was seeking to kill him. Jezebel was a non-Jew, a Syro-Phoenician woman married to Ahab, the king of the northern kingdom of Israel. She was so powerful and induced her husband to promote pagan worship in the land of Israel. Under her influence many Jews indulged in idolatry (Baal worship). The prophet Elijah could not sit aloof for this infidelity to continue. He championed the God's cause by launching a fearless crusade against pagan worship in Israel. The Lord stood by his side and he defeated all the 450 false prophets of Baal in a fire contest on Mount Carmel and put all of them to death. This fearless showdown infuriated Queen Jezebel and she sent soldiers to go after Elijah. Sensing danger, Elijah fled into the desert where he became despondent and preferred to die than to live. God sent an angel to bring a hearth cake and a jar of water to Elijah to eat and drink. He nourished and sustained him to continue his journey to Mount Horeb.

Elijah's experiences teach us valuable lessons. We each can identify with his predicament.

All of us know the challenges of our times. Our Christian faith is constantly under attack. Society questions our beliefs and pushes us to compromise our Christian values.

Like Elijah we are called to be true prophets and agents of God. We need courage and the zeal to live and speak the truth of God's kingdom.

We can trust in God's tenderly love and care to provide us both physical and spiritual sustenance to do his work.

In the gospel, Jesus continues his teaching on the bread of life discourse. He declares himself as the living bread from heaven. He promises us that eating his flesh and drinking his blood will lead us to eternal life.

The crowd who followed and listened to Jesus' teaching found it difficult to accept this statement. They murmured against him and they left him.

We should count ourselves blessed for the gift of faith that opens our eyes, hearts and minds to the truth of Jesus' teaching. Our Catholic faith helps us to recognize Jesus in the Holy Eucharist. It is this spiritual meal that we gather to celebrate and share as one family of God.

Saint Paul reminds us in the second reading to live in a manner pleasing to God. He urges us to avoid all negative behaviors such as bitterness, anger, harsh words, and slander and strive to be kind, loving, forgiving, and compassionate, and to others.

The words of the psalmist invite us to taste and see the goodness of the Lord. As Eucharistic people, let us savor the goodness God gives us and strive to bring others to know his love and care for their lives.

God bless.

Rev. Dr. Ben