

Beloved in Christ, today Jesus advances his teaching on the Bread of Life by identifying himself as the **bread that came down from heaven** (Jn.6:41). This accession has begun a serious debate between Jesus and the Jews. Jesus warned the Jews to stop murmuring and listen to wisdom... “your ancestors ate the manna in the desert, but they died; ... 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**” (Jn.6:51). Thus, Jesus has proved himself to be a master homilist. He took a passage from the Torah, “He gave them bread from heaven to eat” and interpreted it in an entirely new way to mean his Father giving Jesus himself as the bread of life so that they may eat it and not die like their ancestors in the desert. Jesus then supported this interpretation with a passage from a prophet, “They will all be taught by God” to show that now they are being taught by the Father through Jesus, so Jesus is the fulfillment of the Law and the prophets. Jesus concluded by equating this bread with his flesh. Jesus is the living bread that comes down from heaven so that a man may eat it and not die.

As the bread of life, Jesus continues to draw us to himself in order to nourish and strengthen us on our journey, just as God drew Elijah into the desert in order to nourish and encourage him. Many times, people have said to me: “Father, there is no reason to continue living; I am tired of this life. I am alone in my struggle. I do not think God still hears my prayers, I feel like dying.” I know very well that such moments in life that pushes us to make such statements are not easy at all. However, speaking this way is a sign of almost accepting defeat and loss of hope in divine providence and restoration. The good news is that there is hope in Jesus the bread of life who draws us to himself every day in order to nourish us. I consider our first reading today very encouraging in many ways. It is very encouraging because many of us are in the same boat right now with Elijah. Thus, we can all identify with Elijah and his predicament, when he thought that all hope was lost, God divinely intervened by feeding and strengthening him for his journey (I Kgs.19:6-7).

In today's Gospel, Jesus confronts his own obstacles the Jews who would not believe in him and tried every means to discredit him and his work. Jesus did not give up; instead, he remained focused and proved to be the bread of life that had strengthened Elijah. Hence, Jesus draws us to himself every day through the Eucharistic table in order to nourish and strengthen us for our journey. He fills us with his spirit who leads and directs us on the right path. He is the bread of life that satisfies our spiritual hunger. Therefore, today, Christ is saying to us as he spoke to Elijah in the desert, “rise, eat, drink, and continue your journey with a new hope, zeal and a new spirit.

The reading contains some theological meanings, first, **spiritual thinking verses earthly thinking**. The person who is not capable of spiritual thinking will never catch on to what Jesus is trying to say. The issue last week was **spiritual bread verses earthly bread**. This week the issue is Jesus as the source of that spiritual bread: **a spiritual understanding of his origin and identity verses an earthly understanding of who Jesus is (Jn.6:41-42)**. People object that they know his parents, as a result, how can he claim to have come down from heaven? They know his family and so jump to natural conclusions about his origin. You and I know the truth of Jesus' divine origin: God took on flesh and was born of a virgin. But Jesus' original hearers were not yet ready for spiritual truths of this magnitude.

The second point is that Jesus describes **faith** as a gift, and if you're not open to this gift, you won't accept it even when God offers it. No one comes to Jesus unless the Father draws him (Jn.6:44). Here Jesus makes an interesting distinction between hearing and seeing. Believers hear the Father, learn from him, and come to Jesus. But only Jesus has seen the Father. The Bible says that no human can see God and still live. Jesus can see God because he is God, but since Jesus is also human, you and I can look on Jesus — and thus in that way see God and still live. Indeed, instead of dying because we see God, we receive eternal life because we see him in Jesus.

Finally, dear friends, as Elijah was given divine intervention so shall our sorrows will soon turn into joy. That loneliness in the desert of our life is about to be disappeared by multitudes of angels who are ready to attend to us; that apparent defeat is about to be turned into great victory because: “Weeping may endure at night but joy comes in the morning” (Ps 30, 5). Let us not lose hope; rather, ask for the grace to continue and, he will grant us our hearts desire. Then, all we need to do is simply: “Taste and see that the Lord is good,” God will surely gladden our heart with the Bread of Life. Amen!