

AUGUST 12, 2018

Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Reading 1 [1 KGS 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.

Responsorial Psalm [PS 34:2-3, 4-5, 6-7, 8-9](#)

R. (9a) Taste and see the goodness of the Lord.

Reading 2 [EPH 4:30—5:2](#)

Gospel [JN 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."

HOMILY:

“Are fries okay with that?” I can’t count the number of times I heard that question across the week that I was away for vacation a couple of weeks ago. At almost every lunch, knowing that, with typical vacation indulgence, there was probably a large evening meal to come, I’d go for something lighter and perhaps healthier: For example, one day I ordered a grilled vegetable wrap with nice, healthy tomatoes, cucumbers, lettuce, maybe some spinach and bean sprouts (with a side of self-congratulation for such a healthy choice!), which was met with THAT question: *are fries okay with that?* Evil, fat and calorie laden deep-fried potato sticks, ready to derail the healthy meal! Are fries okay with that? *I’m sure the fries would be perfectly okay with ruining the healthy plan!* With no small degree of sadness but with determination of spirit, I heard coming out of my mouth, “No, maybe some fresh fruit.” Or on another day, how about a nice grilled (not fried!) chicken sandwich, with some nice vegetables (spinach, tomatoes, onions) on top and some flavorful mustard to top it off (get behind me, mayo!), a true victory of healthy, low-cal eating until . . . “are fries okay with that?” I’m sure those little devils would be okay with crashing this nutrition party! Pretending enthusiasm, I heard myself saying, “No, I’d like some of your *lite coleslaw* instead.” Around every corner, lurking to assail and clog my heart, were those demons, those deep-fried visitors from France who have long overstayed their welcome and . . . yet . . . maybe I could have just a couple . . .

It's a battleground out there, isn't it: the battleground of how to eat right—the right foods and, even more difficult, the right amount of these right foods! For once again we are faced with the fact that, from the womb, we have been created, as I characterized last week, as “hungry beasts,” creatures that are always looking to feed and be fed. And I have found that this struggle with food, particularly in our most prosperous nation, is NOT a “God-free” zone in my life. What does our faith say about our eating conundrum that, for many, has become too often an eating disorder?

When we might come here to find rest from life's struggles, an hour of peace, we are assailed today with multiple references about food in the scriptures. From the Old Testament First Book of Kings, we hear of the prophet Elijah's travel into the desert, that hungry place of fasting, where without food he prepares to die . . . until an angel of the Lord comes to him and serves up some nourishing *bread and water*. The angel then says, "Get up and eat, else the journey will be too long for you!" We're told, "He got up, ate, and drank; then strengthened by that food, he walked forty days and forty nights to the mountain of God, Horeb. *It must have been great bread!* And the Gospel is all about a hungry crowd and eating. There, after Jesus has fed the crowd with a miraculous multiplication of bread, eating is still on their mind. But now, after Jesus has puzzled them with the claim that HE is the “bread of life,” they murmur in confusion and dissatisfaction, after which he says again, “I am the bread of life” and then continues, “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.” *As with the bread given to the prophet, so too this is great bread—the greatest!*

Let's be honest: how and what we eat dogs us most every day! What our God, who gave us these appetites, is saying to us through Jesus is this: any bread (or any other ordinary food you eat) will leave you hungering for more. For hungry beasts are who we are. But this hunger is meant to drive us to the One alone who can satisfy—the Bread of Life, tasted here and fully satisfying in that eternal banquet for which we have been created and redeemed. Imagine an eternity where hunger is totally absent—where the hungry search is no more! This is the Lord's promise to us.

So, come, for a foretaste of that satisfaction, and let us “Taste and See the Goodness of the Lord.” And at each meal, and each time we feel our stomachs rumbling, and especially when we're asked, “Are fries okay with that?”, let's remember that all hungers will return unsatisfied until that time when the Bread of Life that we here receive is given to us in eternal abundance in the heavenly banquet for which we have been created. So, let each moment of hunger remind us of the One for whom we truly hunger and the One who alone can satisfy the God-sized longing in our souls. And with that hunger in mind, let us come to the One who alone can eternally satisfy us.