

My Dear People of God,

On this Nineteenth Sunday of Ordinary Time we find ourselves on the third episode of our journey through the '**Bread of Life Discourse**'. This journey began with the account of the multiplication of loaves and fish, a manifestation of **generosity** as shown by the boy and by Jesus. Last Sunday Jesus invited his listeners and indeed all of us to go deeper and to seek the break that truly satisfies. He went on to declare Himself as the bread of life and to assert that ***whoever goes to Him (receives Him) will never hunger and thirst!***

In today's gospel reading we have a continuation from last Sunday's episode where the significance of Jesus as the bread of life was further revealed. It opens with the Jews murmuring at Jesus because He had said He is the bread that came down from heaven. The murmuring of Jesus' Jewish opponents is reminiscent of the murmuring of the Israelites in the wilderness as read in last Sunday's first reading. They were unwilling to accept Jesus' assertion because they were acquainted with Him and with His parents. Since they knew His human origins, how could He rightfully claim a heavenly origin.

My dear brothers and sisters, the 'murmuring' continues today albeit in a **different way**. **The Eucharist is the source and summit of our faith. The church teaches and asserts that in the sacrament of the most holy Eucharist, are contained truly, really, and substantially, the **body** and **blood** together with the **soul** and **divinity** of our Lord Jesus Christ.** How many of us honestly believe in this assertion? To the extent that we don't, we are essentially murmuring! Like the Jews who rejected Jesus' assertion because they were familiar with His human origin, many today reject the Church's assertion because of their familiarity with the elements of bread and wine! The familiarity leads us to rather assert that it is mere bread and mere wine and after all it tastes the same.

Despite the fact that He was so boldly challenged, Jesus gave those who murmured against Him an answer to their protests. He traced His origin back to God, thus showing that He had the right to make such claims. However, the evidence He offered could only be accepted in faith and so it is with us. In our own times, the many Eucharistic Miracles (*where the bread and wine has turned into flesh and blood*) are interventions by Jesus to affirm His presence in the sacred species (the Eucharist). When we ask God for some kind of sign that will assure us that this new challenge is really what God wants of us, the answers we receive must themselves be accepted and understood in faith. The only assurance we are given is the promise that those who are open to God will be taught by God. This assurance is rooted in faith and those who are not open in faith will not understand.

The murmuring is also evidenced in the due regard and respect we render to the Eucharist. If there was less murmuring, the Eucharistic adoration chapels would be full. The manner of our preparation for, receiving of and conduct in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament would be different. At the end of the day, those who murmured, lost out on the relationship with Jesus

and in the same vein, when we murmur today, we are the ones who lose out on the benefits He bestows upon us.

In the first reading, we have the account of the great prophet Elijah being fed and strengthened by the mysterious food presented to him by an angel and he was as a result able to make the long journey- forty days and forty nights to the mountain of God, Horeb. In the same vein, the Eucharist is mysterious food given to us for our journey of faith, a journey destined not for the mountain of Horeb, but to eternal life.

As we continue on our journey of faith, let us embrace, deepen and strengthen our relationship with the Lord through His gift of the Eucharist. Let us in a special way consider a more reverent conduct in the Eucharistic presence (including the reverent receiving of Holy Communion) and let us seriously consider Eucharistic adoration. In so doing, we shall not be murmuring.

Thanks and God bless

*Fr Simon Peter*