

We continue our prayers these days for Fr. Brian Joyce. Last weekend he was in the hospital with pneumonia and this past week he had several tests to determine if he had had another stroke. Thank God he did not have another stroke but he is in a rehabilitation place now in Walnut Creek undergoing therapy to get his strength back. He has asked not to have visitors but if you do decide to visit him, please spend no more than two or three minutes at a time so he can rest. In the meantime, Fr. Paulson has invited him to come here afterwards for more rest. We pray that our Lord will be for him both strength and healing.

That is an image of our Lord that I would like to talk about today: strength. We don't often think of him as strength. Many folks think of him as Victor - victor over sin and death - and quite often, men would relate to him in this way. He is the ultimate conqueror. Easter reminds of his victory over death and how he conquered sin and death. Others would relate to him as victim, the one who suffered and died for us - and quite often a good number of women would relate to him in this way. Still others would identify with our Lord as the great illuminator, the one who gives light to the world....light to those in darkness

Today I would like to present Jesus as our strength because in today's Gospel we see him as the Bread of Life, the bread that will bring us to eternal life.

In today's first reading, we hear about Elijah being given food, food that would sustain him and keep him going. We all know how food is important to us. It nourishes us, gives us strength, and keeps us alive. We all eat food, even food we don't like (broccoli comes to mind) but we eat it anyway to give us strength. Jesus reminds us of the food that will bring us to eternal life and it will give us strength along the way

But here is where we need to be honest: honest with ourselves, with others and with our loving God. Why? Because sometimes we think we can solve our own problems and fix things ourselves...and we don't need God's help. That is where we are wrong. We all need God's help and our Lord's strength. However, sometimes things get in the way - and St. Paul reminds us in today's second reading that anger, bitterness, fury, shouting and malice prevent us from being kind, forgiving and compassionate.

We all have been angry at one time or another - and anger is usually a reaction to a hurt or a fear. We've all been resentful at least once or twice during our lives - and a resentment is a re-sensing where we nurture our hurt feelings. We nurture them, we water them, we nourish them over and over and quite often, the only ones that would know about our resentments would be ourselves. Those who hurt us haven't a clue as to where we are.

And so we need to let go of our anger...of our resentments and I would like to suggest we do so in the following way. We need to pray for those who hurt us (a person, a boss, a church or a community) and pray in a very specific way. We need to pray for that person's health, happiness and prosperity - even if we don't mean it at first. We have to fake it until we make it. Pray every night for two or three weeks and after praying so long for that person's health,

happiness and prosperity, we will forget our own hurts and resentment - and the anger we have just might go away or at least diminished.

When this happens, we just might be more kind, more forgiving and more compassionate. May we do so, realizing that Jesus is the one that gives us strength - strength for the journey. Let the Church say AMEN