

AUGUST 8, 2021
Sunday of the 19th Week in Ordinary Time
John 6: 41-51

“THE BREAD THAT I ALWAYS YEARN FOR.”

“There were almost 3000 priests in Dachau concentration camp near Munich in Germany, most of them were killed in the most brutal ways imaginable. Some were human horses. They were used to drag wagons down to the nearest railway station. When there they contrived to make some of the wheels fall off the wagon outside the home of the local parish priest. In the commotion the priest came out and they were able to whisper to him in Latin that they were priests and needed bread and wine to say Mass. On subsequent trips the priest would smuggle some bread or sometimes a grape. Late at night, after curfew, and under penalty of instant death, those priests would gather with small groups of the faithful to celebrate Mass and to receive Holy Communion. One of the survivors described the atmosphere at those Masses. He said ‘we got so much out of the Mass.’ It was Christ coming to them in their Calvary. They got so much out of the Mass because they brought so much to the Mass.”¹ These priests and even other people who longed for the Bread of Life, will do everything to take and receive Jesus amidst danger and life-threatening situation. Jesus, the Bread, is their life and they can not live without Him.

“A statement by St. Ignatius (AD 45-107), the third Bishop of Antioch and a disciple of St. John the Evangelist, could help us appreciate what Jesus means by saying that the bread of life is his flesh. In the year AD 107, St. Ignatius was condemned by Emperor Trajan to be devoured by wild beasts in the Coliseum. Courageously anticipating his crushing or cruel death, St. Ignatius said: ‘I am the wheat of the Lord and must be ground by the teeth of wild beasts to become the pure bread of the Lord Jesus Christ’. In other

¹ frtommylane.com

words, just as grains of wheat have to be ground to produce bread, so St. Ignatius accepted the painful process of martyrdom at the mercy of the wild beasts in order to be crowned by the Lord. The above usage of the word 'wheat' to describe the painful death of St. Ignatius should remind us of Jesus' own figurative description of his sacrificial death: 'Unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single grain; but if it dies, it yields a rich harvest' (John 12:24). Therefore, in saying that the bread (made of 'wheat') that he would give is his flesh, Jesus was also referring to his sacrificial death by which the Father gives new and eternal life to all who believe. In other words, Jesus' flesh can be offered us only through his death (on the cross) by which we receive eternal life."²

Our first reading from 1 Kings, it portrays Prophet Elijah's physical and spiritual hungers. He was nourished by the angel with the miraculous food when he was running away from the soldiers of Queen Jezebel. After taken the food given by the Lord, Elijah was strengthened on his journey which he took forty days and forty nights to Mount Horeb, the place God instructed him to do and continue the prophetic work.

St. Paul in our second reading reminds the Ephesians "Put away from you all bitterness and wrath and anger and wrangling and slander, together with all malice, and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you. Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children, and live in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God."³ This must be the way we live our Christian lives, a fragrance and aroma that can enhance other lives. Some saints have that kind of fragrance that really affects other people like Padre Pio whose fragrance from his stigmata or wounds of Christ's crucifixion in his hands and feet,

² www.catholicforlife.com

³ Ephesians 4: 31 - 5: 2 Holy Bible NRSVCE Canadian Bible Society

led others to conversion and help them to lived a life in line with Padre Pio's words of love, service, mercy and compassion for others.

In our gospel, "Jesus knew that the Jews were upset about the explanation that the multiplication of bread and fish signified that Jesus himself was the Heavenly Bread that gives eternal Life. Jesus challenged the Jews to take a journey of Faith by seeing, not 'the son of Joseph,' but the 'one who came down from Heaven.' Saying, 'No one can come to me unless drawn by the Father who sent me ...' Jesus told his listeners, and tells us, that everyone who has become a disciple has done so because God the Father has called him or her to Jesus. It is an act of God that has brought us to follow the way of Jesus. Faith is a gift. To follow Jesus is to live by Faith; to believe means to make those necessary changes to one's lifestyle that being a believer demands. This persistent theme serves to remind the reader/listener that only Jesus, the true Bread of Life, can impart the gift of eternal Life to the faithful. As Jesus, the Bread of life, gave life to the world through selfless compassion and humble servanthood to others, we, too, can give life to the world when we look beyond our own needs and security to the good of others. Then we shall give, not from our treasure but from our poverty, all the gifts God has given us, using them to serve everyone in need, with the love, compassion, and selflessness of Jesus, revealed in the Gospels."⁴ So, my brothers and sisters, as Christ offered and still offering Himself for us to be nourish and live, we are called to share the life that Jesus gave us. Our life must be the reflection of Jesus' life. We are His reflection.

Let this be our prayer: "Lord Jesus Christ, You are the living bread which sustains my life. May I always yearn and hunger for the bread that come down from heaven and lead me to share the love, mercy, joy, and peace that comes from You today and always. Amen."

⁴ <http://frtonyshomilies.com>