

Mass/Family Picnic with Persons with Disabilities Community 2:30 pm
August 12, 2018 19th Sunday in Ordinary Time St. Jerome Church, Battle
Creek

What a beautiful day---great day to be outdoors, or to gather together here for our summer Family picnic. I'm sure we're going to have some delicious food and snacks. Food is such an important part of our lives. Obviously, food is essential to our lives---we need it to stay alive. But, it's also a pleasure. There are some foods that we like, and some we don't. We all know right off the bat what's our least favorite food; and we also know what's our most favorite food. And if you're having a bad day---if you're sad for some reason, --- maybe you had a fight with one of your good friends----maybe someone said something to hurt your feelings----or maybe you're just feeling a bit under the weather, we're also pretty sure what "comfort food" we would hope that our parent, or loved one, might whip up and bring us that they know would put a big smile on your face.

We just heard these beautiful Readings from God's holy Word for today, and two of them had to do with food.

In our First Reading, we hear about Elijah, one of the greatest of all the Old Testament Prophets. His "job" was to speak on God's behalf, and to be the one to warn people if they were going in the wrong direction, and to encourage them if they lost faith, or lost their trust in God. He was bold, brave, strong----he even spoke up to Queen Jezebel. Of course being a rather "wicked Queen", she didn't like that and decreed that he was to be put to death. So, Elijah decided to run away.

That's where we find him in today's Reading. He had lost his courage, he allowed his fears to get the best of him, and in many ways, he had forgotten about God. We even hear him say to God: "I've had enough; I give up; I just want to die!" That's pretty desperate. So, God sent His Angel to Elijah---and what does the Angel bring? Food! (A hearth cake and a jug of water---it's nothing very exciting, but it's what he needed!) The Angel has to convince Elijah to get up---shake it off---eat, and know that everything will now be better! Eventually Elijah did; he got back on track. He was grateful to God, and renewed his commitment to God to be His holy Prophet.

In today's Gospel, we see Jesus preaching to the people, many of whom were some of the people from His own hometown of Nazareth. But some of these people didn't want to believe what Jesus was saying. As we heard them saying: Who does Jesus think He is telling us what to think or do? We know who he is—*“Isn't this Jesus, the son of Joseph? Do we not know His father and mother?”*

One of the ways that any one of us can get ourselves into trouble is to figure that we know all there is to know. That we have everything figured out. One of the virtues that we all have to keep practicing is what we call “humility” or “docility”, especially when it comes to our Faith. We can't get to a point---any of us---when we figure we don't need to learn anything more.

That was the problem with the people Jesus was talking to. They thought they knew it all. They couldn't believe Jesus when He had said that *“He had come down from Heaven”*, because they thought they knew who Jesus' father was, thinking it was St. Joseph. Of course, we know that Joseph was only Jesus' foster-father. Jesus told them at that point Who He really was when He said: *“No one can come to me unless the Father, Who sent Me, draw him....Everyone who listens to My Father, and learns from Him, comes to Me.”* In saying that, Jesus was telling them that He was the Son of God. That was a huge piece of information!

But then, Jesus made them an offer that was just as huge, when He said: *“I am the Bread of Life.”* So there we are again, talking about food---but this, of course, was very special food. Jesus said that this “Bread of Life” was even greater than the Manna God's Chosen People had received from Heaven during their journey through the desert into the Promised Land. That Manna, even though it came down from Heaven, was just like all the other food and snacks and desserts in our lives---it's what is called perishable---it won't last. We have to eat it/use it before it spoils or rots. What Jesus was offering was food that is “imperishable”. And what's even more astounding is that this food---this “Bread of Life”---is the Gift of Himself!

Obviously that's a very concept to understand. In fact, we can't possibly understand it with our little brains. We can only accept what Jesus teaches us, and offers us, if we have faith. And if we have the virtue of humility, docility, and allow ourselves to realize that God knows infinitely more than we could ever possibly know. Jesus offers to give us this “Bread of Life” to help us when we feel helpless; to encourage us when we feel afraid; to strengthen us when we feel weak or vulnerable; to be our nourishment---what we need as the essential

spiritual food to stay alive----and to be our delight---like the comfort foods and special tasty treats that make our days special.

Jesus, the Living Bread Come Down from Heaven is what keeps us alive, and what gives us the strength to get up and keep going, like the Angel of God did for Elijah in today's First Reading!

St. Paul told us today to "*Be imitators of God.*" We have to know who we are---we're God's beloved children. Well then, St. Paul says, act like who we are! Beloved of God. Act like who we are---brothers and sisters in Christ. Act like who we are---precious and holy in God's sight, and so we treat one another with love, respect and dignity.

Food is what we need to stay alive. But there's nothing like a Big Mac, or a Hot Chocolate Sunday, to make us feel even better. That's what God's love for us is like, but only 10 million times more.

Let us be always grateful to Jesus for this most special Gift of the Holy Eucharist. And let us love one another, as the way for us to show Jesus our appreciation.

God bless you now and always.