

My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Well, I'm back at it. After a couple of months of having a seminarian to write my articles, it is hard to get "back in the saddle!" Every three years, we have the blessing of making our way through the "Bread of Life" discourse in John 6, which is John's theology of the Eucharist. We are now in the midst of these readings, and so it is a good opportunity to reflect more deeply on this central Sacrament of our Faith, the source and summit of our Faith.

In the first reading this weekend, we hear about Elijah the prophet and his struggles. Two chapters previous to this reading, Elijah declares that "during these years there shall be no dew or rain except at my word" (I Kings 17:1), in essence creating a drought for a long period of time. This, of course, was an incredible hardship on the people of Israel, and did not endear him to the wicked king. At the right time, he calls an end to the drought, but also had a "showdown" between the prophets of *Ba'al* (the pagan god) and the Lord (I Kings 18). In case you didn't guess, the Lord wins! This makes him even more *persona non grata* to the king and queen (a real *Jezebel*... actually, it is from her that we get the saying). Jezebel declares that she is going to have Elijah killed, and so he runs away, off into the desert.

This is where the first reading comes in. Elijah is at his wits end. He is exhausted. He is discouraged. He is parched and hungry. Even after the miracles he has been an instrument of (drought and rain at his word, fire from heaven), he is ready to throw in the towel:

**"This is enough, O LORD! Take my life, for I am no better than my fathers." He lay down and fell asleep... (I Kings 19:4-5)**

You can sense how he is so overwhelmed, he just wants to die, even laying down to let it be done.

But the Lord is not done with him!!

God sends an angel to order him to eat and drink. This food that the angel brought – a hearth cake, a symbol of the Eucharist to come, the Bread of Angels – is waiting for him. At first, Elijah is not effected by eating... he lays down again! But the angel touches him again (I wonder if he kicked him in the ribs...) and commands him to eat "else the journey will be too long for you!" He eats again and then, miraculously walks forty days and forty nights to the mountain of God.

What is going on? God is giving Elijah the strength he needs. While he is overwhelmed by the forces against him, God shows him that He is greater! When we are kicked down by life's trials – and doesn't this happen to us *too much*, whether from the darkness of the world we hear in the news, or the trials in our personal lives, struggles at home, at work, at school, with friends, with finances – we can get despondent and discouraged... at least I know I can. There are times when we feel like we can't go on, that all our efforts have been wasted, that the world is out to get us, and there's nothing we can do right!

Then God sends an angel. He calls us back to His Heart. He invites us to enter into the Life of God through the Eucharist – the very Body and Blood of Jesus, our God! Sometimes we go to Mass and listen to the readings, the Homily and receive Communion... and nothing seems to change – we're still down, and empty and weak – like Elijah. Yet, God calls to us again, "Get up and eat." He wants to lead us into the depths of His Heart. As God was not done with Elijah, He is **NOT DONE WITH US!** He has great plans for us – for you, personally, for me – and wants to pour into us all of the graces we need to fulfill these great plans.

The Eucharist is God's very Life, and He pours His Life *into our lives*. People have done incredible things through the power of the Eucharist. God heals and strengthens. Do you remember how earlier in the summer I invited you to reach out with faith and touch the hem of the garment of Christ? Some have let me know the healings Christ, our Eucharistic Lord, worked in their lives... and I am sure that I have not heard all of the miracle stories! Reach out again and again, at each and every Mass! When you're exhausted, when you are discouraged, when there seems to be no hope, reach out to Jesus and beg Him for the grace you need. Do you think that He cannot answer a cry from the heart?! As the Psalm says today,

**When the afflicted man called out, the LORD heard, and from all his distress he saved him....**

**Taste and see the goodness of the Lord. (Psalm 34)**

God hears our cry! Let us allow the goodness of the Lord to overwhelm our brokenness, weakness and discouragement. His Body and Blood are true medicine for immortality! Taste and see!