

## Homily for the 19<sup>th</sup> Sunday 2021

If there have been times when we have thought that God is asking too much of us, then we are in good company, because the prophet Elijah shows this by saying in our first reading, “Lord, I have had enough. Take my life, I am no better than my ancestors.” Elijah was God’s appointed prophet, fleeing for his life for faithfully preaching God’s word, but now filled with self doubt and wanting to die. But God has other ideas. Elijah is wakened by an angel in the wilderness and is told to eat and drink. We can see where the story is going, it has echoes of Israel’s wandering in the desert. In deserted places, when we cannot provide for ourselves, only God can nourish us, and that is what happened to Elijah, he is given sustenance so that he can make the journey of 40 days and 40 nights to Mount Horeb, where God will reveal Godself to him, not in “earthquake, wind and fire”, but in a still breeze. Horeb is also called Sinai where God gave Moses the 10 commandments, another kind of bread for hungry people. This theme of being fed is picked up in the Gospel.

We are in the thick of John’s “Bread of Life” discourse and it begins with people complaining because he had claimed to be the bread that came down from heaven. They thought they knew him and so they were not open to what he was telling them. Jesus tells them to stop complaining and then says, ‘No-one can come to me unless they are drawn by the Father who sent me.’ Once again the emphasis is on believing in Jesus as the one sent by God. Seeing with the eyes of faith is a gift from God, a gift that we should treasure and nurture.

Jesus goes on to say, ‘I am the living bread which has come down from heaven, anyone who eats this bread will live for ever.’ In other words belief in Jesus yields eternal life. Belief in Jesus is a fundamental life changing event which does not end with our physical death, unlike their ancestors who ate manna in the desert and are dead. This is a radical claim, and, as we will see, it will be too much for many of those listening to Jesus. There are times when we are challenged to change our way of thinking, indeed our way of living.

St Paul takes this up in our second reading with some hard hitting advice which is not always easy to follow; “Never have grudges against others, or lose your temper, or raise your voice, or call each other names, or allow any form of spitefulness.” There is a whole examination of conscience for all of us in that short list, especially in times of stress, or when we have been hurt. If that is what we are not to do, then Paul tells us what we are to do, “Be friends with one another, and kind, forgiving each other as readily as God forgave you in Christ.” This is putting our faith into action, reminding ourselves that there is a purpose to our being nourished by the word, and fed by the gift of Christ, his life, his love, himself in the Eucharist. We eat the Body of Christ to become the Body of Christ, not just for our own spiritual fulfilment, but in order to bring about real transformation in ourselves and our world.

## The Bidding Prayers

Celebrant:

Today the psalmist said, I sought the Lord and he answered me, from all my terrors he set me free, so with confidence we bring our petitions to the same Lord.

Reader:

We pray for the whole Church as it gathers to share at the table of the Lord – that it may learn the depths of God’s forgiving love shown in the broken body of the Lord.

Lord in your mercy

We pray for political leaders throughout the world – that they will do all they can for a fairer sharing of the world’s resources.

Lord in your mercy

We pray for those who are terminally ill – that the body of the Lord broken on the cross and shared in love in the Eucharist, will be their food for the journey from this life to the next.

Lord in your mercy

We pray for those who have died, all victims of violence, accident, natural disaster and the Covid-19 pandemic and Louise Harrison, Graham Redshaw, Henry Vincent Friedrich, Stuart Gaunt, Joan Hall, Thomas Collins, Anthony Howarth and John Caulfield whose anniversaries occur this week – that they and all who have died may rest in peace and rise in glory.

Lord in your mercy

Either aloud or in silence we pray for our own special intentions...paue...then

Lord in your mercy

We ask the prayers of Mary as we say, Hail Mary...

Celebrant:

Lord you promise that whoever eats this bread will live forever. Nourish us with the bread of your word and the gift of yourself under the forms of bread and wine and keep us true to your name. We ask this of you who live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.