

August 12, 2019 19 Sunday in ordinary time

A little boy went to church on Sunday. When he came home, he told his Mom, I want to be a preacher. She wanted to know why he wanted to be a preacher. He said, "Because I think it is going to be more fun to yell in front than to sit in the back

We have been going for two weeks on now with John, Chapter 6. The bread of life discourse. We are on week three, we have one more week of this chapter. Last week we talked about the bread that they had and the difference between what we have what they had. We see this in Elisha first reading. Elisha is upset, he's depressed, he's almost suicidal, he's praying to die. He is the only follower of God left. All the others are following the pagan gods and goddesses of Jezebel the Queen, because Ahab her husband let her take over the religion of Israel. It didn't help that Elisha killed 450 of her prophets. So now he's being pursued by the army, so he sits down and wants to die. Most of us have had a moment when we thought, take me God I've had enough. That's where he's at. But God sends an angel with bread, a special kind of bread and he eats two loaves and he is able to walk 40 days and nights not stop. This shows the power of God in the Old Testament but it prefigures, it was a preview of what's coming in the Gospel. Jesus is talking about that very thing today, how much energy, how powerful that bread is. It's interesting because He talks about, "I am the bread that came down from heaven." They can't understand it, they can't stomach it. It's like, this is impossible we know your parents, we know where you're from, how can you say you came down from heaven? How can you call yourself bread? You're not a rock group from the 60s and 70s. You can't call yourself bread. So he has to explain, this bread will give life forever. Once again we see the split in understanding the peoples understanding here on earth. "Oh come on, you can't make us live forever with bread, Elisha only walked 40 days and nights with loaves. Jesus again is talking about eternal life. We always have to take Jesus and thinking about the soul. So the people murmur, "How can this happen who are you? We know who you are." Jesus says, "Stop a murmuring." In the presence of God there should be no doubt, there should be no insults or bad language, no gossip or anything. Are we like them? Do we have to say, "Oh I know Jesus is a man so how can that be his body and blood?" Well, you know people say, "Father if I was back with Jesus I would support him, I would accept him, I would believe in him." No we wouldn't. We'd be blessed if we did but what he is putting forth is so new, we wouldn't be able to take it. The only reason we can accept Jesus today the way we do is we've had 2000 years of getting used to what He said. 2000 years of, "Oh I heard that before. Oh that happens all the time at mass, we hear that." Or, "It's just Sunday again I don't want to church." Many people just do it out of routine, many people do it out of guilt, many people come to Mass and receive communion they don't believe it's Jesus. So even to today it should be easier because we've had time for us to prepare. 2000 years of tradition and teaching. But Jesus still says to us, "Hey, it's not just about the Eucharist it's about life in general." Remember, the bread became a way of saying "life." He said I'm not speaking metaphorically. No he says, "I'm giving you my flesh." This was going to be even harder for people to take. We'll talk about that week. But the Eucharist is a mystery. Some people are more accepting of mysteries than others. Most people don't like mathematics because it's a mystery. Once you get past the numbers and you start getting letters and symbols most people say, "I don't want math." It's a mystery. The mathematicians are very comfortable with mystery, a lot of scientists are. So Jesus' presence is something for us to talk about to ourselves when we look at the mirror. "Do I truly believe that when I go to mass and receive communion, I'm receiving Jesus.?" Someone said that if familiarity does not breed contempt, it takes the edge off admiration. It's a danger for all of us. I celebrate eight or more Masses each week, preach at all of them and some mornings I just

don't feel like doing that. Just like you parents sometimes don't feel like getting up. You count it a blessing the kids sleep in. I have to make myself realize, "What am I doing?" I am consecrating the body and blood of Jesus. I have to be focused, I have to be in admiration, in awe, and in respect. There is a saying priests that we should all remember, "Celebrate this mass as if it were your last." This saying would go well for anybody else too. Attend this Mass as if it were your last. In some countries in the world this is the last Mass. The authorities are going to arrest them outside the church and put them in prison for being Catholics. In China the government is demolishing Catholic churches and saying it's for a new building project. How do they do it? Mass ends, the people walk out, bulldozers are standing there, they come and bulldoze the church in three hours. Gone. Their last Mass in that village. We don't know if this is our last Mass. Are we coming with a ho-hum attitude, are we in a rut, a routine? Or, do we truly find awe, and admiration, and reverence of Who is going to come up on this altar pretty soon. When we come to communion is it just mindless walking up here like zombies? Or do we think, "Jesus my Lord and Savior. Jesus, Jesus, Jesus. This is the Son of God." Do we think these thoughts as were coming up or do we just go on automatic pilot? That's the whole thing about familiarity. Does it take the edge off our admiration and respect for Jesus? Does it make a difference in our lives that we can receive communion? I've had people tell me. "Father, if I don't go to mass and receive communion on Sunday I can't make it through the week at work." One guy told me, "Father, I finally figured out that communion only lasts me into Thursday." And I thought, God help your coworkers on Friday! Think about that. Would we want to live the world without the Blessed Sacrament?

Think of the difference the Catholic Church has made in the history of the human race. Most of our medical advances, most of our genetics, most of our mathematics (I'm sorry I had to mention one), most of our advances in alcoholic beverages come from Catholic priests and laypeople. It was monks in France who invented champagne. It was monks in France that improved beer where everybody likes to drink it. It was a monk in Germany started genetics. Astronomy, all these things came down through the Catholic Church because of the Blessed Sacrament. Because of the faith they had in Jesus Christ. So these people in the Gospel, are telling Jesus, "We know who you are, you're just a person." They don't have a clue. But now 2000 years later we do. But yet it's routine and we need to look at how we receive communion. How we relate to the Eucharist. When I come up here am I thinking or am I just on automatic pilot? We are the most blessed and privileged people in the world. Nobody can go to Denny's or Biscuits and get the Blessed Sacrament. You can't order Jesus on the menu. But Catholics can come to Mass anywhere anytime and receive the greatest gift ever, the Son of God. And we can unite ourselves with divinity; greatest gift ever. We above all are the most blessed. Do we think of ourselves that way? Do we recognize that? If we are blessed, why are we blessed? So we need not to lose the edge of admiration. We need to make sure we keep admiration and reverence for the Blessed Sacrament in our lives. Then one day when our faith turns into real vision we will see exactly what Jesus was talking about and rejoice with Him forever.

God bless you.