

***“Anyone who eats this bread will live for ever; and the bread that I shall give is my flesh for the life of the world.”***

I remember a recently ordained priest talking to us about what influenced him in his decision to become a priest. As a Seminarian on a parish placement he accompanied a priest to visit a sick elderly parishioner. The man was in a very poor state of health, suffering from a severe illness. However, in spite of his obvious pain he expressed great delight at receiving our Lord in Holy Communion. It was almost as if he became transfigured in receiving our Lord in Holy Communion. The priest explained that the parishioner’s faith in the real presence of the Lord helped him to realise just how powerful are the healing effects of the Sacraments, especially when we receive them with Faith.

In the first reading of today’s Mass we encounter Elijah fleeing for his life from the King and Queen. He is depressed and downhearted, ***“I have had enough”***, he says to God, ***“Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors.”*** I am sure that from time to time we may have all felt a little downhearted. At such times our good Lord wishes us to turn to Him and to place all our trust in Him.

God’s response to Elijah is to send an angel to comfort him and to provide him with food for the journey. We are told that in the strength of the food Elijah walks for forty days and forty nights until he reaches Horeb, the mountain of God; a distance of about 300 miles; so, he would have walked 7-8 miles a day.

This reading about Elijah is chosen because in today’s Gospel Jesus tells us that He is the Bread of Life. Jesus wishes to provide us with spiritual food for our journey as pilgrims to the mountain where God dwells. But this spiritual food is Jesus Himself, as the eucharistic hymn “At the Lamb’s High Feast”, explains.

***“Praise we Him, whose love divine, gives the guests His blood for wine, gives His body for the Feast, love the victim, love the priest.”***

When we receive the Eucharist for the last time in this life the Church describes it as “**Viaticum**”, which is a Latin word meaning “**food for the journey**”. It is the spiritual nourishment we need as we come to terms with our own dying. It is given to bring great comfort and hope that we shall soon rise with Christ to a new and wonderful life.

Receiving Jesus worthily at Mass is a pledge of our future glory. How great is the glory that awaits us if we but love one another as Jesus has asked us to. “**Be friends with one another**”, says St. Paul, “**and kind, forgiving each other as readily as God forgave you in Christ.**”

In today’s reflection in the Magnificat, written by Blessed Jean-Joseph Lataste, he writes:

***In the Holy Eucharist Our Lord is a friend, a friend who loves us madly from all eternity; a friend who since our birth has never ceased pursuing us with His love, crying out: “My child, my brother, give me your heart.” He is a devoted friend who has extended his arms for long years without becoming discouraged by our indifference and our refusal; for all that, a friend who can expect nothing from us, from whom we hold everything, who still prepares us for gifts without number, so that finally He will introduce us into His kingdom, give us a share in His glory and His eternity, allow us to sit by His side, open His heart to us, and unite us to Himself so closely that, according to His words, we become one with Him, just as He and the heavenly Father are one.”***

We have such sure hope, expressed in this reflection by Blessed Jean-Joseph, because we believe and trust in Jesus and in His Words:

***“I am the living bread which has come down from heaven. Anyone who eats this bread will live for ever, and the bread that I shall give is my flesh for the life of the world.”***