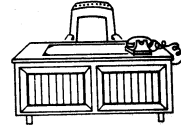


19th Sunday in Ordinary Time

August 12, 2018



From the Desk of
Fr. Romanus

Dear Parishioners,

Sunday Reflection:

This Sunday, we continue to read from the sixth chapter of John's gospel started two Sundays ago with the Feeding of the Five Thousand. We have two more Sundays remaining in a five-Sunday exploration of this chapter with enormous Eucharistic implications. The idea of reading from the same chapter on the same subject for five Sundays may sound too repetitive and boring. However, it underscores the importance of faith in divine benevolence. The sixth chapter of John's gospel is part of what scholars refer to as "The Bread of Life Discourse." Comprised of sixty-nine verses, it happens to be the longest chapter in John's gospel.

In this Sunday's gospel, the crowd responds to Jesus' assertion last Sunday that he is "the bread of life" by murmuring. Obviously, these people knew him and his family too well and wondered why he would claim to have come down from heaven. To them, it sounded like crazy-talk. They failed to understand that the Jesus of Nazareth they knew too well was also the Christ of faith, the Son of God.

The theology of "hypostatic union" states that Jesus Christ is a union of two natures, the heavenly and the earthly. The two natures are inseparable. Whereas Jesus' hometown people knew him as Jesus of Nazareth, they did not know him as the Christ of faith. Their knowledge of one did not translate to knowledge of the other. In their confusion, they stated, "Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph? Do we not know his father and mother? Then how can he say, 'I have come down from heaven?'"

Jesus distinguishes the 'bread of life' from perishable food, like the manna eaten by their ancestors who died nonetheless. On the contrary, the bread he gives will lead to eternal life. You can imagine how perplexed the people must have felt to learn that the bread he was speaking about was actually his own flesh. What would you think if your neighbor was speaking of himself/herself in this manner? Their lack of faith could be due to their inability to understand the two-nature theory and a general lack of openness to the guidance of the spirit and new revelation.

For us, however, we have come to know Jesus intimately in the Eucharist as food that nourishes and strengthens. To those who receive him shortly before passing from this life, he becomes "food for the journey" or "viaticum." Certainly, we could see the connection to the first reading where God fed Elijah through an angel. The angel said to Elijah, "Get up and eat, else the journey will be too long for you" (1 Kings 19:7). Although the connection to viaticum is evident, it also applies to all who consider life itself a journey.

Those who deprive themselves of the spiritual strength that comes from receiving the body and blood of Christ will be unable to complete the journey of life. The food an angel provided for Elijah strengthened him to journey forty days and forty nights to Mount Horeb. Likewise, the frequent reception of Holy Communion gives us the requisite strength to complete the journey of life. One who understands the true meaning of the Eucharist would do everything possible to be present at every Mass and take advantage of every opportunity to receive Communion. One also ought to receive the sacrament worthily.

Have a great week!

Fr. Romanus