

Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time



*Elijah went a day's journey into the desert,
until he came to a broom tree and sat beneath it.
He prayed for death saying:
"This is enough, O Lord!
Take my life, for I am no better than my fathers."
He lay down and fell asleep under the broom tree,
but then an angel touched him and ordered him to
get up and eat.
Elijah looked and there at his head was a hearth
cake and a jug of water.
After he ate and drank, he lay down again,
but the angel of the Lord came back a second time,
touched him, and ordered,
"Get up and eat, else the journey will be too long
for you!"
He got up, ate, and drank;
then strengthened by that food,
he walked forty days and forty nights to the
mountain of God, Horeb.*

This reading from the First Book of Kings is the First Reading this Sunday. It's likely that many of us can relate to Elijah's lost enthusiasm for life and desire to give up. "Take my life" is a request that God interprets a bit differently than we do. When we enter recovery from the family spiritual disease of addiction desperate for change, God finds a way to nourish us and propel us for the journey ahead, often sending angels and messengers to do His work.

The Second Reading this Sunday describes the spiritual quest that lies ahead on the road of recovery. Saint Paul writes to the Ephesians:

*All bitterness, fury, anger, shouting, and reviling must
be removed from you, along with all malice. And be
kind to one another, compassionate,
forgiving one another as God has forgiven you in
Christ.
So be imitators of God, as beloved children, and live in
love,
as Christ loved us and handed himself over for us
as a sacrificial offering to God for a fragrant aroma.*

These are marching orders that cannot be completed on our own. Just as God has lifted us and given us new hope and purpose, we are to continue seeking Him as the source of everlasting life. This is made possible by the strength of community, the grace that accompanies working the Twelve Steps, and embracing Jesus Christ in the sacraments.

There is a spiritual dimension about us, the soul, that must be fed if we are to grow. Just like the muscles of our body break down if we do not get physical food, our souls tend to become lethargic, hopeless, and unhealthy when impoverished. This is the condition of many around us, giving us reason to soften our expectations of others as we begin to make our own progress with the help of God.

Prayer is a good foundation for our spiritual diet. Spending quality time with God brings rest and renewed hope for the recovery journey. When we allow ourselves proper quiet space, we get an opportunity to savor the mystery of God. Spiritual reading brings a desired depth to our mind and can help counter-act futile thoughts and discipline our hearts and our minds.

Corporal and spiritual works of mercy provide an excellent way to transition from bitterness, fury, and anger to an attitude of forgiveness, hope, and imitation of God. When we accept God's mercy and share it with others, a divine hunger is filled.

Finally, we can feed our soul with the spiritual food of Jesus—the Eucharist. "I am the bread of life," Jesus proclaims again in this Sunday's Gospel Reading. The food that brings everlasting life is the same that provides us freedom from the spiritual disease of addiction, one day at a time.

Reflection Questions

- Can you identify with Elijah's feeling of wanting to give up the fight?
 - What happened and how did you find the grace to overcome?
- What spiritual food is your soul and mind craving?
- How do you embrace God's mercy and share it with others?

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Sunday Mass Readings this Week

First Reading: 1 Kings 19:4-8

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 34:2-3, 4-5, 6-7, 8-9

Second Reading: Ephesians 4:30-5:2

Gospel: John 6:41-51