

Nineteenth Sunday in ordinary time

A man is driving into a church. As he pulled into a crowded parking lot, he asked the cop standing there, "is it all right to park here?" No, He said. "can't you see that no parking sign?" what about all those cars in there? " he shrugged, They didn't ask."

Dear Friends,

When we are down in life, we need some support and strength. In our family life, we get that support and strength through our spouses and children, friends and family and the community. This support helps us to move forward in our life. this support strengthens us outwardly and sometimes inwardly. But our faith strengthens us inwardly and brings us self-confidence.

Today's readings help us to reflect about how God strengthens us in through spiritual nourishment.

In the first reading, King Ahab of Israel married a pagan queen, Jezebel, who imported pagan worship into Israel. The prophet Elijah challenged 450 of the pagan god Baal's prophets, defeated them in a public sacrifice-contest and killed all of them. The furious Queen Jezebel sent soldiers to kill the prophet. Today's first reading expresses Elijah's discouragement and frustration as he fled for his life. Elijah fell into a sleep of exhaustion while awaiting release through a speedy death. God heard His prophet's prayer and sent an angel to feed him twice and strengthen him in his flight.

In the Gospel, Jesus claims that he is the bread from heaven. People were not able to accept it and they were murmuring that they thought they knew his father and mother (v. 42) and saw him as just another hometown boy – a carpenter by profession without any formal training in Mosaic Laws and Jewish Scriptures. John brings out the similarities and contrasts between the old manna in the wilderness and the bread of life that tied to Jesus. Jesus challenged the Jews to take a journey of Faith by seeing, not "the son of Joseph," but the "one who came down from Heaven." Saying, "No one can come to me unless drawn by the father who sent me ...

As people of Israel and Jesus' time, we also complain when God doesn't meet our expectations. God strengthens us through the spiritual nourishment which has to change our lives.

The second reading talks about the practical ways how we are strengthened by God through Jesus Christ. St. Paul teaches the Ephesians and us to remove all bitterness, and anger and fury, rather be kind and loving and compassionate.

Pope John Paul II taught: "The Eucharist is the Sacrament of the Presence of Christ, who gives himself to us because he loves us. He loves each one of us in a unique and personal way in our practical daily lives: in our families, among our friends, at study and work, in rest and relaxation. He loves us when he fills our days with freshness, and also when, in times of suffering, he allows trials to weigh upon us: even in the most severe trials, he lets us hear his voice.