

Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

The 98-year-old Mother Superior from Ireland was dying. The nuns gathered around her bed trying to make her last journey comfortable. They gave her some warm milk to drink, but she refused. Then one of the nuns took the glass back to the kitchen. Remembering a bottle of Irish whiskey received as a gift the previous Christmas, she opened it and poured a generous amount into the warm milk. Back at Mother Superior's bed, she held the glass to her lips. Mother drank a little, then a little more and before they knew it, she had drunk the whole glass down to the last drop. "Mother," the nuns asked with earnest, "please give us some wisdom before you die."

She raised herself up in bed and with a pious look on her face said, "Don't sell that cow."

Dear Friends,

We all need so many calories to keep ourselves active and alive. It varies from person to person. The food that we eat nourishes and strengthens our bodies.

Today's words reveals a distinct source of power, a food from God for our life journey. The prophet Elijah is weak from hunger, but the angel of the Lord feeds him with a hearth cake and a jug of water. Elijah is no longer hungry, but what is more important, "strengthened by that food, he walked forty days and forty nights." There was work to do, a journey to be made, and the food made it possible.

When Jesus talks about the bread that he is giving, he compares it to manna, which performed a role similar to Elijah's food: it enabled a journey to take place (out of the desert and into the promised land). So, it is obvious that Jesus intends the bread of life not just to satisfy hunger but also to make possible the accomplishment of a task, the completion of a journey.

I recently read a passage from the private writings of the Saints of Calcutta. I thought I would share with you. "Mother Thresea got permission to have the blessed sacrament in her hospital room. She had heart failure, and a tube was put in her lungs to assist her breathing. Before the tubes were finally removed, the doctor said to the priest, "Father, go and bring that box to Mother. For a second, the priest wondered, what box - shoe box? He said, "that box, the temple they bring and put in her room and mother looks at it all the time. If you bring it and put it in the room, Mother will become quiet. He said to the priest that when that box is there in the room, she is just looking and looking and looking at that box." The Hindu doctor was an unknowing witness to the power of the Eucharist over our Mother.

In one sense, this journey is on the road to salvation: "bring us to our promised inheritance," we pray in the opening prayer. We know that throughout our lives we face

many challenges that may weaken our physical strength but also our spiritual strength. Just as St. Theresa was strengthened in her journey by the presence of the Eucharist, we too should go to God's presence in the Eucharist to strengthen us on our journey.

We are all on a journey.

I challenge you this week that as we are fed by the Eucharist, to seek God's plan for our journey and ask for the bread of life to sustain us on the journey of eternal life.