

Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time † Sunday, 8 August 2021



In England & Wales Cycle of Prayer –
For a Deeper Understanding Between Jews, Moslems and Christians
Keynote: The Bread of God gives life – life eternal

First Book of Kings 19: 4-8

The prophet Elijah afraid for his life, is now 'on the run' in the wilderness, and '*sitting under a furze bush wished he were dead. "Lord," he said, "I have had enough. Take my life." Then he lay down and went to sleep.*' But the Lord God through the ministry of his messenger provides a baked scone and a jar of water to refresh the prophet, and so Elijah continues his journey for forty days, finally reaching Horeb – the mountain of God.

In our living we may grow weary, even, at times, wishing we were dead! But, we too, have been provided with food for the journey of life. The Christian Eucharist is often called 'viaticum' the food for the journey, and this passage prepares us for a deeper understanding of the gospel text chosen this day.

Responsorial Psalm 33 (34): 2-9 – In time of fear and terror a song in praise of God

Letter of Paul to the Ephesians 4:30 – 5:2

It was not uncommon for letters in the classical world to include lists of vices and virtues. Here the apostle Paul lists the vices that poison the relationships in the Christian community. '*Never have grudges against others, or lose your temper, or raise your voice to anybody, or call each other names, or allow any sort of spitefulness.*' Then he urges Christians to be more aware of the character, – the seal of the Holy Spirit that each has received – a Spirit whose characteristic is forgiveness, '*Be friends with one another, and kind, forgiving each other as readily as God forgave you in Christ.*' For '*the Holy Spirit of God has marked you with his seal for you to be set free when the day comes.*'

Gospel according to John 6: 41-51

Jesus said, '*I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate manna in the desert and they are dead; but this is the bread that comes down from heaven so that you may eat it and not die.*' This may sound straightforward enough, but then Jesus says, '*I am the living bread which has come down from heaven... and the bread that I shall give is my flesh for the life of the world.*' Not an easy one this, even the Jewish bystanders who heard Jesus saying these words, found them difficult. Many actually walked away refusing to accept what they were being told. But Jesus insisted, '*I am the bread of life... 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.*' We may not fully understand the reality of the Eucharist, but herein lays the mystery of the saving action of Christ in our lives. This is the food for the journey of life – our viaticum – the bread of the presence – our food for the journey of life that brings us to eternal life. To share it we have but to step out on the journey of faith with Christ who, as he promised, is always with us.