**19th Sunday of Ordinary Time – Cycle B**

1Kings 19: 4-8; Eph 4: 30 – 5: 2; John 6: 41-51

August 11/12, 2012

Have you ever had to walk a long way without food or water? Perhaps some of you who have served in the armed forces remember those marches in boot camp. Maybe others here have been lost for a day or two in the wilderness and had to find your way without food or water. I recall my earlier years as a long distance runner and struggling through a marathon – over 26 miles – without food or water.

To have to travel long distances without food and water is not only very difficult, it is extremely dangerous. You soon will collapse and be unable to continue the journey. Yet, we regain our strength quickly after eating and drinking. We are quick to recover.

What would you say if someone were to tell you “Eat this once a week and drink this once a week, every week (if you are prepared), and you will live forever, but if you do not eat and drink, you will die”? What would you think? What if an angel poked you in the ribs when you were exhausted and down and out from the demands of daily life – work, family, community - and what if that angel were to tell you that if you eat this and drink that you will be able to go a long way?

The question is, “What is it that sustains you in your life, especially when life may seem dry and exhausting? To whom or to what do you turn? What is the source of your strength?”

We hear in the first reading today that Elijah fell asleep under a broom tree. His journey was difficult and he was exhausted. He hadn’t eaten or drunk anything to sustain him under the hot sun. He was fleeing from danger - from death - for you see the wicked queen Jezebel was out to kill him. Then an angel of God appears to him and tells him to eat and drink. Although Elijah’s recovery is not instantaneous, it is rapid and we hear that strengthened by that food he walked forty days and forty nights (over 300 miles actually) to Mount Horeb where God was present. Yes, Elijah was near dead, but he was given new life strengthened by the food provided to him by God.

The older I get, the more I can identify with the weariness of Elijah. The older I get, the more I realize how much I need to be fed and refreshed frequently. The older I get, the more I realize in other words, how much I need the Word of God and the Bread of Life - the Bread of Life that sustains me and the Word of God that refreshes my soul.

My friends, we as Catholics know that we cannot live without the Mass, without the Eucharist, without receiving the Body and Blood of Jesus. It is the source of our spiritual energy. It is the source of our strength. It is the source of our lives as Christians! We are to be fed by his Body and strengthened by his Blood.

In last week’s first reading from the book of Exodus, if you recall, the Hebrew people became hungry and thirsty when they left Egypt and traveled in the desert, and they began to murmur against God and Moses. Even though they were being fed with manna – bread sent from heaven – even though they drank from the spring of water gushing from the rock, they grumbled.

In today’s Gospel we hear how the people in Jesus’ time had just been fed with the multiplication of loaves and fishes, and yet they murmured, they grumbled, against Jesus.

Do we grumble against God and his Church, even though each day we can be fed with the Body of Christ and refreshed with his Blood? Why do we murmur and grumble? Is it because we don’t listen to the Truth?

***Truth stands alone, but error requires the grumbling of many people.*** Truth is powerful; grumbling and murmuring are weak.

If we don’t listen to God’s word of truth then we will not believe. We will lack faith. Faith comes from hearing God’s word spoken and proclaimed by his sacred ministers - the bishops, priests and deacons. Faith comes from reading the Word of God and reflecting on it. Faith comes from encountering Jesus Christ. If we listen to truth, then we will have faith and our hearts will be open to Jesus’ Real Presence and to the graces given to us in the Eucharist. If we do not listen and believe, then we turn away from our nourishment, we turn away from the Eucharist, we turn away from Jesus himself.

We all need to stop grumbling against God and the Church and start listening and believing!

As Jesus tells us today, God the Father draws to himself whomever he wishes. God the Father draws us and God the Son lifts us up with his Body and Blood. God the Son takes us who have been called and raises us up to new life by our partaking of his Body and Blood which is a sharing in his life, death and resurrection. This is such a mystery! It is called the Paschal Mystery! It is a gift to which we must respond with faith, acceptance and gratitude, not with idle murmuring and disbelief.

God gives us himself in the Eucharist which sustains us on our journeys of faith.

My friends, God wants to feed us. God has sent his Son Jesus to accomplish this. Jesus gives us living bread from heaven. Jesus is that bread. We must come to believe in him and eat his Body and drink his Blood in order to have life. The bread that Jesus gives is in fact his flesh and blood.