

Sunday August 8, 2021
19th Sunday in Ordinary Time
Parishioner Reflection

By: Paul Legace

The readings this week speak of transformation. The Eucharist is at the heart of this transformation for us. Jesus tells the people He is the living bread that came down from heaven and those who eat it will live forever. Each Sunday we have the opportunity to nourish ourselves with the body of Christ. How will it transform us in the week ahead to do the work of the Lord? We're taken back on a journey in the Old Testament to the time of the Israelites when God sent them manna from heaven to quell their hunger. Jesus is like that manna but so much more that his sacrifice can transform us if we have the courage to give ourselves to the betterment of humankind in our daily lives.

In the first reading taken from 1 Kings 19.4-8, we meet Elijah who flees into the wilderness away from Jezebel who means to kill him. Elijah is weary and despondent because of his behaviour. He sees himself no better than his ancestors that fled into the desert and defied the Lord despite the Lord's unfailing help to escape from the Egyptians. Elijah falls asleep but is awakened by an Angel that tells him to wake and eat. Near Elijah is a cake baked on hot stones along with a jar of water. He eats and then falls asleep again. Once more the Angel comes and commands him to awaken and eat for the journey ahead will be arduous. Elijah follows the Angel's words, eats and drinks and leaves for Mount Horeb, the mountain God spoke to Moses upon long ago. The Lord doesn't relieve Elijah from his difficult role in life but gives him nourishment to soldier on. Elijah is transformed, renewed in spirit to move forward despite the distances and difficulties he will face. God will not abandon his servant. He will not abandon us when we are in need. We need to call upon the Lord and have faith that we will not be abandoned in our daily lives no matter what tragedy or circumstance we find ourselves in. The psalm echoes this theme as well. "I sought the Lord, and he answered me, and delivered me from all my fears." Do we have the faith to truly "taste and see that the Lord is good"?

In the second reading taken from Ephesians 4.30-5.2, St. Paul essentially tells the Ephesians to put on Christ. Live your lives modelled after Christ Jesus. They should rid themselves of all hatred, anger, jealousy, slander and thoughts of revenge. Stop trying to find fault with your neighbours. Instead be generous, forgiving of one another and charitable. Be like Christ in all your relations with others whether they be family, friends or complete strangers. Paul reminds them of their baptism and how this seal marks them for redemption. They must give up their negative habits of self-indulgence

and be transformed by the love of Christ. Be like the children of God and imitate his actions. Christ so loved the world he gave himself to us and so we must strive to do the same for others. How can I be an emissary of love for the sake of others? Could I find some time to help an elderly neighbor cut her lawn or trim the hedge? Perhaps I could volunteer to help my daughter's baseball coach by assisting in taking on the role of a first or third base coach. Alternatively, I could write a letter or send a text to a distant relative/grandparent or an estranged family member saying hi and asking how they're doing. Volunteering at a local food bank or assisting the CWL or Knights of Columbus with their numerous tasks within the parish are some other ideas as well.

In the Gospel taken from John 6.41-51 the message of transformation is front and centre. The Eucharist can transform us to be like Christ in our world. As bread and wine are transformed into the body and blood of Christ we can be transformed to be the nourishment for others and assist them to transform their lives for the better.

At the beginning of the Gospel there are many who are upset with Jesus for claiming he was the bread that came down from heaven. How can he say he comes from heaven when we lived with his parents all these years and have seen him grow up in our midst? Many of these people want to see Jesus as one like them. Jesus tells them to stop complaining and to remember that no one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them. Perhaps we are like these people who are marked by our baptism and yet grumble when more is asked of us in our relationships with others. We have been chosen by God to be his hands, his feet, his eyes and ears here on earth. Let's accept this role rather than complain and be thankful we've been chosen, favoured in the sight of God for this task. We need to believe in our redemption and accept our role in helping make this world a better place for all of humankind. So how can we sustain our neighbor in his or her hour of need? Many Indigenous Canadians feel alienated from a society that for too long abused them, destroyed their language and culture and tried to assimilate them. Can I educate myself to understand the history of residential schools and how it has marginalized Aboriginal Canadians so as to have a greater sense of empathy for them and their need to be equal members of Canadian society? When a family member, neighbor or friend faces sudden unemployment, a serious illness or tragedy can we offer words of encouragement or support that will sustain him or her? Can we offer a comforting hand or an attentive ear for them to share their feelings of hopelessness? As my father would like to say, "we are called at times 'out of the blue' to give hope, to be mentors, to express faith, to offer another view of things for such people to gain perspective."

By participating in communion the Holy Spirit transforms us to be Christ-like to all we meet. This transformation is for a mission. We are sent forth after mass to be

Christ's body to our broken world, to be poured out , broken and eaten; to give of ourselves so others may live and see the love of Christ in their midst.