

WSC REFLECTION GUIDE

Readings: 1 Kings 19: 4-8
Psalm 34: 2-9
Ephesians 4: 30, 5: 2
John 6: 41-51

19^h Sunday in Ordinary Time
August 9, 2009

Word: **Jesus, the Living Bread, leads us to eternal life.**

Theme: **Jesus leads us to eternal life when we live in love – kind to one another, compassionate, and forgiving** [Self-giving]

Promise: ***“Everyone who listens to my Father and learns from him comes to me.”*** (John 6: 45b)

Reflection:

The Council of Trent summarizes the Catholic faith by declaring, “Because Christ our Redeemer said that it was truly his body that he was offering under the species of bread, this has always been the conviction of the Church, The holy Council now declares again, that by the consecration of the bread and wine, a change occurs in the whole substance of the bread, which becomes the body of Christ our Lord, while the substance of the wine transforms into his blood. This change, the holy Catholic Church fittingly and properly calls ‘transubstantiation’”(CCC 1376).

Indeed, it is this belief that distinguishes our Catholic faith from all the other Christian faiths. In this, we are assured of Jesus’ real presence in what others might view as mere remembrance, or symbolic reenactment of an act that happened more than 2000 years ago. We Catholics rally around Jesus’s radical proclamation, ***“I myself am the living bread come down from heaven...the bread I will give is my flesh, for the life of the world”*** (John6:51). Jesus’ first intention in instituting the Eucharist is to give him as food. Indeed it is often said that we are what we eat, and when we receive Jesus in Holy Communion, we can boldly claim with St. Paul that ***“It is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me”*** (Galatians 2:20). Communion, that is to accept Jesus as food and believe that through his presence in us we are transformed to become truly the sons and daughters of God, is the ultimate act of faith.

In the first reading Elijah the prophet, was fleeing from Jezabel and was on his way to Horeb. During that long and difficult journey, he got so tired he wanted to die. ***“Enough, O Lord! Take my life’. Lying down there he fell asleep...”*** (1Kings 19:4). An angel of the Lord woke him up and offered him bread, asking him to eat for he still has a long journey ahead. Elijah ate and was sufficiently strengthened to continue his journey to Horeb, the mountain of God. What he could not do on his own strength, he could do with the meal that the Lord gave him when he was at the point of despair.

Here Elijah, called by the Lord to the faith, stands for us. In biblical language, mountains are almost always places of transformation. Each of us has a personal Mt. Horeb to climb. Mt. Horeb also represents the holy mountain of God – heaven - from where God our Father, calls us to our final destination. The length of the journey, forty days, represents our own long arduous journey on earth - saddled with much opposition, hardship, temptations and difficult moments. How many times did we see Elijah weakening, becoming so exhausted, he just wanted to give up? But just like Elijah, we

too are awakened from our stupor by an angel of our Mother Church sent by God in his infinite wisdom - the BLD Community. Here, we meet Jesus in our many encounter and formation programs, at the core of which is our Eucharistic Celebrations in which we gather around God's table to receive nourishment and strength for our daily spiritual journey. This is enshrined in our fourth pledge to the Lord when we become Covenanted Disciples of the community: "We shall regularly receive the Sacraments of our Faith, particularly the Eucharist and Reconciliation, and bear witness to the power of God's grace in our lives;"

In the sixth chapter of John, we see Jesus gradually building up to open before us an excellent perspective on reality – God's perspective. First, by multiplying loaves and fishes he miraculously satisfies his listeners' physical hunger (John 6 1-14). Next, he challenges them to seek the food that lasts to eternal life, not that which perishes (6:27). Finally, he tells them that he himself is the new manna from heaven and that those who eat this bread will live forever (6:51).

In the Eucharist we receive Jesus, the bread of life. Unlike the bread brought by the angel to Elijah, who sustained him only for a time, the bread offered by Jesus gives eternal life. This "eternal life" does not only refer to a happy existence after death. But because the bread 'transubstantiates' – not just symbolically - into the actual body of Jesus, every time we receive it we are actually being filled with his divine life. Through Jesus, the believer participates in the life of God. If we stop to reflect upon it, this is an overwhelming, awesome reality. It means life without beginning or end, a life of love and happy self-giving, a joy that overcomes every sorrow.

As Jesus has given himself to us as food and sustenance for the journey, the Holy Spirit dwells in us, inspiring us and transforming our lives as he guides and enables us to follow the path to the mountain of God. St. Paul speaks about surrendering to the life of the Spirit by getting rid of all that is not of God in our lives – ***bitterness, passion and anger, harsh words, slander, and malice of every kind*** (Ephesians 4:31). For Jesus to lead us to eternal life, we are to follow the way of love. The theme for the week tells us: **Jesus leads us to eternal life when we live in love – kind to one another, compassionate, and forgiving.** It is by being kind, compassionate and forgiving that we can fulfill our community value of self-giving, a virtue that promotes unity with others.

Jesus wants to reorient our lives toward him, to make him our first priority. With his life in us, we are given the power to put off sin (Ephesians 4:22) and to offer our bodies as living sacrifices to God (Romans 12:1). When we receive Jesus in Holy Communion we receive him who healed the centurion's servant, who forgave the woman caught in adultery, and who rose victorious from the grave. We receive him who longs to transform us from glory to glory (2Corinthians 3:18). Jesus wants to share this life with us. Let us receive him always with reverence, bringing to him our hunger for forgiveness, healing and strength. It is then that we can move forward to do his will to comfort the sorrowful, free the oppressed, encouraged the weary. And as he lives in us, his promise in John 6:45b: "***Everyone who listens to my Father and learns from him comes to me,***" finds fulfillment.

Suggested Personal Reflection:

1. What is the meaning of the Eucharistic Celebration for you? Do you make it a point to receive communion? Why or why not?
2. Was there ever a time in your life when you “murmured” (unbelief) about Jesus as “Bread of Life”?
3. Are there still areas of bitterness and malice in your life that block your journey to the Kingdom and compromising your path to holiness? How can you overcome such blocks?

Next Week’s Daily Mass Reading Guide:

August 10, 2009 (Mon):	2 Cor 9: 6-10; Ps 112: 1-2, 5-9; Jn 12: 24-26
August 11, 2009 (Tue):	Dt 31: 1-8; Dt 32: 3-4, 7-9, 12; Mt 18: 1-5, 10, 12-14
August 12, 2009 (Wed):	Dt 34: 1-12; Ps 66: 1-3, 5, 8, 16-17; Mt 18: 15-20
August 13, 2009 (Thur):	Jos 3: 7-11, 13-17; Ps 114: 1-6; Mt 18: 21-19, 1
August 14, 2009 (Fri):	Jos 24: 1-13; Ps 136: 1-3, 16-18, 21-22, 24; Mt 19: 3-12
August 15, 2009 (Sat):	Rv 11: 19; 12: 1-6, 10; Ps 45: 10-12, 16; 1 Cor 15: 20-26; Lk 1: 39-56

“Ignorance of the Bible is ignorance of Christ. Read your Bible daily!”