

A Short Teaching on Flesh to Bread
by Deacon Gerry Palermo

Greetings on this Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Readings: 1 Kgs 19:4-8; Ps 34:2-3, 4-5, 6-7, 8-9; Eph 4:30—5:2; Jn 6:41-51

The Church reads the Gospel of John, Chapter Six over the course of five weeks. This is week three.

In the first week, Elisha provides food for his men that initially is poisonous but by the hidden grace and promise of God he is able to make the food healthy for 100 men. In the second week, Moses intercession of Manna illustrate the openly super abundance of God's love in providing for his people with the mysterious 'What is it?' bread given to Israel for 40 years. In the third week, Elijah is given what appears to be simple bread but bread that contains supernatural grace to sustain him for 40 days and 40 nights.

Hidden / transforming grace, open superabundant grace, simple supernatural grace.

The Gospel is equally progressive. In the first week, Jesus provides food for all with the multiplication of the loaves and fish to feed the 5,000. He does so by using the small and simple gifts of the people and brings to them healthy food in a thanksgiving meal. In the second week, confusion is lifted when Jesus proclaims that the gift and the gift giver are one in the same, himself. The manna bread and the thanksgiving bread are both gifts from heaven. And he is the gift. This week, Jesus goes a step further, not only is he the bread, his flesh is the bread, 'the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world' (Jn 6:51).

Bread, superabundant bread, manna / thanksgiving bread, Jesus is bread, Jesus' flesh is bread.

At each step Jesus is met with resistance. Week one, they want to make him gift-King. Week two, demanding proof he can give bread as well as Moses can. This week, yet you are the son of Joseph and Mary with no 'sign of a prophet', prove yourself. (Spoiler alert) Next week, the people must confront the logical conclusion of flesh-to-bread. So we'll hold off here.

It is written in the prophets: They shall all be taught by God (Jn 6:45). (x-ref Is 54:13).

It is God himself through His Son that we have been taught Flesh-to-bread-to-eat-to-live-forever. Jesus is quoting Isaiah 54:13... its entirety is - All your children shall be taught by the LORD; great shall be the peace of your children. Jesus chose this critical dialog to assert He, as God, is teaching us the depth and reality of the mysterious 'What is it?' bread.

I invite you, then, come to the Eucharistic celebration, come and eat and drink of Jesus. The living flesh, and mother's milk, 'the river of life-giving water, sparkling like crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb (Rev 22:1). Taste and see how good the LORD is; blessed the man who takes refuge in him (Ps 34:9).

Peace be with you.

Deacon Gerry