

19th SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME; Cycle – B; Aug. 11th 2024
1Kings 19:4-8; Ephesians 4:30-5:2; John 6:41-51

Dear Sisters & Brothers,

As we continue with the Eucharistic Discourse of Jesus in John we are confused by the abstract words of Jesus. This was the same problem the audience faced when they listened to Jesus directly. Last week we heard him concluding the passage with the saying: **“I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me will never hunger, and whoever believes in me will never thirst.”** Perhaps, this statement of Jesus gave boost to the people who thought that he was going to work another multiplication of bread. But they wondered, what Jesus meant by ‘I am the bread of life.’ Then Jesus added more fuel to the confusion of people, claiming, **“I am the bread came down from heaven.”** The cause of their murmuring was that Jesus claimed that *he came down from heaven*. At least for time being they ignored the saying of Jesus’ **‘I am the bread of life;’ rather tried to catch him on his claim that he came down from heaven.**

In the Old Testament, the Prophets were believed to be sent by God. But they never claimed that they came down from heaven. According to the belief and expectation of the Jews the only one who would come down from heaven would be **the Messiah** and when he would appear, nobody would come to know where he came from. So according to the Jews when Jesus claimed that he came down from heaven, he was blaspheming. For, apparently as the son of the carpenter Joseph, he was pretending to be the Messiah. For this claim, in Jewish Law there was only one punishment and that was death. Indeed, finally, Jesus was awarded death penalty for the reason that he claimed to be the Son of God.

One thing we notice in the Eucharistic discourse of Jesus in John that step by step he becomes intense and deeper in his teaching. Last week he concluded saying, *I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me will never hunger and whoever believes in me will never thirst.* That means, Jesus is asking his followers to satisfy their spiritual hunger and thirst, not material hunger and thirst, by just approaching and believing in the bread of life. But here he assures them that **those who eat this bread will never die.** In the second part of the same verse Jesus says, **‘I am the living bread’ and whoever eats this bread will live forever. *The phrases, ‘I am the bread of life and I am the living bread’ have different meaning.*** I am the bread of life means – Jesus is the source of life. **On the other hand ‘I am the living bread’ means – Jesus is the bread of life that is always living.** He uses it in present continuous tense, *‘I am the living bread.’ Hence, in*

past Jesus was the living bread, today he is the living bread and tomorrow he will be the living bread. So those who ate that bread in past still live; those who eat in the present also live and those who will eat in the future will live. Of course Jesus was speaking about the eternal life, not our earthly life. So it very clear from the saying of Jesus that Jesus, the living bread is the source of our eternal life. Finally, Jesus concludes today's passage with clear mentioning that **the bread he gives us is his flesh which caused a big scandal among the Jews.**

For 1500 years, in the Church the Eucharist remained unquestionable as the crown of all Sacraments and source of eternal life. When the Church was split and hundreds of Christian denominations came into existence, the Eucharist was interpreted very wrongly against the original teachings of Jesus. Today many Protestant denominations don't have the Eucharistic celebration and those who have it, hold a different understanding of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. They say that Jesus never meant that he was going to give his flesh to eat; rather it is a symbolic saying. These days many Catholics think that there isn't much difference between the Catholic Church and other Christian denominations. But the two major factors that distinguish the Catholic Church from other denominations are ***the Sacramental life and the Eucharistic celebration and devotion we have. If the Sacraments are the crown of the Catholic Church, Eucharist is the crown of all Sacraments.*** The main source of our grace is the Sacraments. *But when we receive the Eucharist not only we receive the grace but also the author of grace, Jesus Christ himself.* Among the 33,000 Christian denominations in the world only Catholic Church has understood the discourse of Jesus the way Jesus expected. And Catholic Church has given the due respect and importance to the Body and Blood of Jesus.