

19th Sunday in Ordinary Time –

by *Father Dave*

(1 Kings 19: 4 – 8; Ephesians 4: 30 – 5:2; John 6:41 – 51)

From the beginning of time, trees have loomed large in some defining moments for human beings. Think of Adam and Eve – their eating the fruit of the Tree of Life symbolically expresses the truth of human disobedience to God and of Paradise lost. In the life of George Washington, his integrity was evident from an early age when he courageously owned up to cutting down the cherry tree. And Isaac Newton had an equally defining moment beneath a tree, when a falling apple helped him formulate his theory of gravity.

Elijah had a defining moment in his life beneath a tree. He has reached “the end of his rope”. His life is a failure, the queen wants him dead, he is in despair, his faith has left him and he prays for death. But God does not allow Elijah to die. He sends His angel to nourish him. God gives Elijah new strength and new hope so that he can make the journey to Horeb, the mountain of God. His strength will be renewed so as to face the challenges of life. The Gospel also presents a defining moment in the life of Jesus and His followers. Although He has just fed the multitude with the miracle of the loaves and fish, the crowds are complaining: “Who does He think He is, telling us that He will give us Himself for food? We grew up with Him! He’s no better than any one of us!” But today we do know that Jesus gives us His flesh and blood for sustenance.

We all face defining moments, when the reality of our lives tests our faith. And at those times, God sends His angel to nourish us, just as He did with Elijah. Each Eucharist that we celebrate is also a defining moment in our lives because God invites us to “get up and eat” and to accept the nourishment that He offers to us. Each time that we gather for the Eucharist, we journey closer to God’s Kingdom and recommit ourselves to its values.

Let us pray for the Conversion of the World
& for Peace.

Saints for the week –

St Lawrence, August 10 – a deacon of the Roman Church, went to his death four days after the martyrdom of Pope Sixtus during the persecution of the Emperor Valerian in the year 258. According to tradition, Lawrence, aware that he was also to be martyred, began to distribute the monies and treasures of the Church to the city’s poor. The Roman prefect, hearing about this, wanted the wealth for the government, so he promised Lawrence clemency if he would show him where the Church’s gold and silver were. Lawrence asked for three days to gather the treasure. Then he went through the city and invited all the poor and

misfortunate supported by the Church to come together. When the prefect arrived, he saw the treasure of the Church: the blind, maimed, lepers, orphans, and the old. Angrily, the prefect ordered Lawrence to be burned alive. Witnesses described the saint cheerfully undergoing this dreadful death, even joking with his executioners. Many non-Christians were so moved by this event, according to tradition, that they converted. In fact, it is said that the entire city of Rome became Christian as a result of Lawrence’s life and death.

Maximilian Kolbe, August 15 - St. Maximilian Kolbe was born as Raymund Kolbe on January 8, 1894, in the Kingdom of Poland, part of the Russian Empire. He was a Polish Conventual Franciscan friar and a martyr in the German death Camp of Auschwitz during World War II.

Kolbe was very active in promoting the Immaculate Virgin Mary and is known as the Apostle of Consecration to Mary. Much of his life was strongly influenced by a vision he had of the Virgin Mary when he was 12.

St. Maximilian Kolbe organized the Militia Immaculata (Army of the Immaculate One) after witnessing demonstrations against Pope St. Pius X and Benedict XV. His goal was to work for the conversion of sinners and enemies of the Church, specifically, the Freemasons and he would do so with the intercession of Mary.

Kolbe also founded monasteries in both Japan and India. In 1936, Kolbe's poor health forced him to return home to Poland, and once the WWII invasion by Germany began, he became one of the only brothers to remain in the monastery. He opened up a temporary hospital to aid those in need. When his town was captured, Kolbe was sent to prison but released three months later. Kolbe refused to sign a document that would recognize him as a German citizen with his German ancestry and continued to work in his monastery, providing shelter for refugees - including hiding 2,000 Jews from German persecution. After receiving permission to continue his religious publishing, Kolbe's monastery acted as a publishing house again and issued many anti-Nazi German publications.

On February 17, 1941, the monastery was shut down; Kolbe was arrested by the German Gestapo and taken to the Pawiak prison. Three months later, he was transferred to Auschwitz. Toward the end of his second month in Auschwitz, men were chosen to face death by starvation to warn against escapes. Kolbe was not chosen but volunteered to take the place of a man with a family.

It is said during the last days of his life Kolbe led prayers to Our Lady with the prisoners and remained calm. He was the last of the group to remain alive, after two weeks of dehydration and starvation. The guards gave him a lethal injection of carbolic acid. The stories tell that he raised his left arm and calmly awaited death. St. Maximilian Kolbe died on August 14 and his remains were cremated on August 15, the same day as the Assumption of Mary feast day.

Bulletin Reflection by Seminarian Dave

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

Whom do you trust? For some of us, we answer this question with a rather short list of people: perhaps our parents or spouse, or a few faithful friends. Where does Jesus fall on this list?

In today's Gospel, Jesus does not win the trust of the Jews but rather is the subject of their murmuring when He makes some bold, shocking claims about Himself: He is the Heavenly Bread and His Flesh is the Source of Everlasting Life; He is the One sent by God, Who has seen the Father; He will raise believers to Heaven on the last day. To many of Jesus' listeners, these statements are not trustworthy but instead are outrageous and arrogant, coming from the Son of Joseph the carpenter.

The people think they know Jesus, but do they really? How about us... have we closed our minds too, or are we striving to know Jesus for Whom He is? If we knew Him as well as we should, if we truly trusted and embraced that the Gifts of His Body and Blood wash away our sins and bring us to life everlasting, we would run to the Sacrament of Penance and to the Most Holy Eucharist as often as we could. We would prioritize prayer. We would proclaim Christ to others, shouting His Name from the mountaintops through our words and our deeds. The fruit of our trust would be our transformation into people who, recognizing God's Mercy and Grace, would be more kind, compassionate and forgiving. We would do a better job living up to Paul's challenge, in our second reading, to be imitators of God.

Now, we have heard that no one can come to Jesus unless drawn by the Father. Our Lord is indeed calling us. He always makes the first move, inviting us into relationship with Him. We do not allow Him to work in us if we don't give Him our trust. To foster that trust, we need only look at Sacred Scripture. In both Old and New Testaments, we see the many ways God has provided for His people: from the time of the prophet Elijah, who, in our first reading from the first Book of Kings, is given food to sustain him on a 40-day journey, to the days of Jesus, who, in loving us and handing Himself over for us, provides all of us with everything we will ever need.

In addition to looking at salvation history found in Scripture, looking at *our own history* can increase our trust in the Lord. For example, for several years, I kept a blessings jar. I would often record, on tiny slips of paper, prayers of thanks for the blessings of a particular day, and then I'd place them in the jar. When I emptied the jar every few months and the slips of paper poured out to cover the countertop, it provided a moving visual of how God had been working in my life, showering me with graces in the form of people and experiences that communicated His Love to me.

God continues to call you and me today, inviting us to know Him. Let us spend some time in quiet prayer and adoration this day, reflecting on the ways He has provided for His people since the dawn of time. Let's respond by accepting His invitation to a deeper relationship, and placing our trust in His Son, the Bread of Life.