

First Reading: Kings 19:4-8

Second Reading: Ephesians 4:30 - 5.2

Gospel: John 6: 41-51

Bernadette Gasslein is the editor of “Celebrate!,” a Canadian liturgy Magazine, as well as the coordinator of liturgical life at St. Charles Parish in Edmonton and she frequently writes short reflections in the Living With Christ for the Sunday liturgies. Her reflection for this Sunday inspired me to look at what are the next steps when we allow the Eucharist to become a part of us. So today we allow Bernadette’s thoughts to join ours as we walk through the scriptures, tasting and savouring them, chewing and swallowing them so that they become a part of us.

In this week’s readings from the Book of Kings, we hear how the Angel of the Lord fed Elijah before he started out on his journey to Horeb, the mountain of God. I am reminded of the manna that Richard Beaudette spoke about last week: the manna for the Jewish people who were being led out of slavery and through the desert. Just as the Jewish people and Elijah were fed, we too are nourished for our own journeys as God calls us.

We are invited to “Taste and see that the Lord is good...” Not in the manner of trying out a new type of food, but rather allowing the fullness of God in the Eucharist to become a part of who we are.

In Paul’s letter to the Ephesians, we are instructed to be “imitators of God,” as beloved children. We are told to live in love as Jesus loved us, and who in love gave himself up for us as an offering and sacrifice to God. This is a sacrifice born out of love. Like the sacrifices parents make as their lives change to accommodate and be about their children. Jesus gave his life so that we might live, and he gives us himself, in the Eucharist as nourishment and in such a way that he becomes a part of us, he is embodied within us. That is Incarnation.

“I am the bread of life... the bread that I will give for the life of world... my flesh.”

The Gospel is quite specific and it is left to us, all of us together to learn what this means to us and how we might live it out. What might it look like as we receive the Eucharist and then return home at the end of the liturgy? How will we live it?

Gerald Darring tells us that Jesus is talking “about not just feeding but also becoming food when he says, “the bread I will give is my flesh, for the life of the world.” Darring continues: “we are to sacrifice ourselves, as Jesus on the cross and in the Eucharist, for the sake of the poor ones... The Eucharist challenges us to become their food, so that they may complete the journey to the mountain of God.”

St. John Chrysostom preached and wrote about the transformation that takes place when we receive the Eucharist: he said, “I receive him to become him, to be Eucharist for others.”

Do we think of it this way in our lives? How do we become Eucharist for someone else? If we believe what St. John and Gerald Darring are saying is true, then we can't simply walk away and forget about it until next weekend. The Eucharist has transformed us and becomes a part of who we are. "Are we willing to be consumed for the life of the world?"

Bernadette Gasslein adds to that: “This transformation is for the sake of the mission.” “We have said ‘Amen’ to this demanding mission. Now our flesh, minds and hearts are on the line, offered through, with and in Christ as a feast for the world’s hungers.” Is this what it is like to be transformed and so become a living Eucharist ourselves?

And what about the mission that Bernadette speaks of? It is much more than a personal mission or our parish mission or even the Oblate mission. There is one mission and that is the mission of God. It is passed down to us through the Church and the sacraments. It becomes ours when we say yes to God, when we turn ourselves over to living fully for God and that is not just reserved for the clergy or members of religious congregations, but rather as stated in “The Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity” it is for each one of us. We may add our personal or communal bias, but it is always “God’s mission” that is shared with us, particularly in the Eucharist.

That is what the Eucharist is about. And we say “yes” – here I am Lord. I have heard you calling in the night. I will go where you lead me, and I will hold your people in my hands.”

We become emboldened to become the Eucharist and food for the world.

I share a short prayer from Fabio Ciardi, a Missionary Oblate of Mary Immaculate who wrote this some years ago:

Bread of life descended from heaven,  
bread of God for us,  
offered every day on the altar of the world,  
satisfies our hunger and thirst for life and joy  
and always leaves us hungry and thirsty for you,  
because we never tire of looking for you again and to follow you.  
Until the moment when the faith is ardent and pure,  
and we will come to you,  
and we will no longer be hungry or thirsty,  
because your Life will be our life,  
the life of the whole world.

This Eucharist becomes something intensely personal and an intimate part of ourselves. Amen