

Friday (Teilhard de Chardin)

What I cry out for, like every human being, with my whole life and all my earthly passion, is something very different from an equal to cherish: it is a God to adore. To adore...that means to lose oneself in the unfathomable, to plunge into the inexhaustible, to find peace in the incorruptible, to be absorbed in defined immensity, to offer oneself to the fire and the transparency, and to give of one's deepest to that whose depth has no end.

Scripture (Col. 2:6-10)

So, then, as you received Jesus as Lord and Christ, now live your lives in him, be rooted in him and built up on him, held firm by the faith you have been taught, and overflowing with thanksgiving. Make sure that no-one captivates you with the empty lure of a 'philosophy' of the kind human beings hand on, based on the principles of this world and not on Christ. In him, in bodily form, lives divinity in all its fullness, and in him you find your own fulfilment.

19th week of Ordinary time

Food for a journey

After Elijah sets off into the desert, fleeing from the vengeance of Queen Jezebel, (who, wants him dead because Elijah killed 400 hundred of her prophets). a deep despair comes over him: he has reached his limits and feels all his efforts have been useless because King Ahab (and so the Israelites) seem to have stayed loyal to Jezebel and Baal even though Elijah had proved that God was the one God. All he wants to do wants to lie down and die. (1 Kings 19:4-8).

It seems that God feels sorry for him, sending him some food and water, but it turns out that God hasn't finished with him and won't accept his resignation. This bread from heaven isn't to comfort Elijah: he eats and settles down to sleep and die only to be woken and told "eat more – you're going on a journey," a journey of 40 days and nights through the desert to meet God on Mt. Horeb – the mountain where the covenant was made with Moses. His journey is to go to the source of the Covenant, to meet God where Moses had met him, face to face. After the meeting, where he understands God is intimately present in the gentle breeze, Elijah told to go back to continue his work. As Jesus continues his 'bread of life' discourse, (John 6:41-51), the people he talks to changes from the crowds who ask for the living bread to 'the Jews' who are complaining to each other. Their problem is that Jesus claims to be the 'bread come down from heaven', but they know who his (earthly) father and mother are. Once again, I have to confess that I would be on the side of the grumblers, the doubters, complaining. Interestingly, John uses this word to recall the Jews complaining to Moses in the desert when they were at their limits and could not see how God was leading them in the desert. I would probably not take too kindly to Jesus' rather curt 'stop complaining to each other', but it is only when we stop talking to each other (within our limits) that we can start to listen to Jesus. As he points out, 'No one can come to me unless they are drawn by the Father', meaning that belief is initiated by God, drawing us (all) to him.

In John, 'I am' sayings reveal his divinity (it's the formula God used to Moses in the burning bush), so 'I am the bread of life.' is an explosive statement, pointing to the changed relationship between God and us. Where Elijah had to go to the mountain to return to the source of the Old Covenant and to meet God, now God comes to meet us, in Jesus. Our role is to respond to the invitation, to be 'taught by God, and to hear the teaching of the Father, to learn from it.', something the complainers were unable to do. As 'the bread of life', he gives us eternal life, life with the Father in the new Covenant – which started with Jesus and is available to live now. As 'the bread of God', he enables us to be drawn to the Father – today.

He comes to us as 'bread for the life of the world', drawing us out of our limited understanding and limited ability to love and into his limitless wisdom and love. Whether it is receiving the Sacrament of Eucharist, receiving Jesus through the Word of God, or adoration of the Eucharist, if I keep him at a distance or restrict him to my own private devotions in church, I am not allowing him into my daily life. For Elijah and the Israelites, this bread from heaven was unsettling and drew them further than they wanted to go, as any relationship with God should (his knowledge of our true nature and his dreams for us are far bigger than our own knowledge and dreams.). I should perhaps worry that it doesn't unsettle me very often. Martin Bennett

Monday (Cardinal Newman)

Be not afraid. He is most gracious and will bring you on little by little. He does not show you whither he is leading you; you might be frightened if you see the whole prospect at once. Sufficient for the day is its own evil. Follow his plan; look not on anxiously; look down at your present footing "lest it be turned out of the way" but speculate not about the future. I can well believe that you have hopes now, which you cannot give up, and even which you support in your present course. Be it so; whether they will be fulfilled, or not, is in his hand. He may be pleased to grant the desires of your heart; if so, thank him for his mercy; only be sure that all will be for your greatest good.

Scripture (1Kings 19:4-8)

Elijah himself went on into the desert a day's journey, and sitting under a furze bush wished he were dead. " Lord" he said " I have had enough. Take my life, I am no better than my ancestors." Then he lay down and went to sleep. Then all of a sudden an angel touched him and said "Get up and eat." There was a scone baked on hot stones and a jar of water. He ate and drank and then lay down again. But the angel of Yahweh came back a second time and touched him and said "Get up and eat or the journey will be too long for you." So he got up and ate and drank, and strengthened by that food he walked for forty days and forty nights, until he reached Horeb, God's mountain.

Tuesday (Pope Paul VI)

We ourselves must be convinced of the need for a living, true and active faith. Even more today when the difficulties are so much greater. It is not enough to have a vague, weak and uncertain faith which is purely one of sentiment and habit, made up of theories, doubts and reservations. Nor is it enough to hold a faith which just accepts what it pleases, or which seeks to avoid difficulties by denying assent to truths which themselves are both difficult and mysterious.

Scripture (Psalm 119:33-37)

Teach me, Lord, the way of your will, and I will observe it. Give me understanding and I will observe your Law, and keep it wholeheartedly. Guide me in the way of your commandments, for my delight is there. Bend my heart to your instructions, not to selfish gain. Avert my eyes from pointless images, by your word give me life.

Wednesday (Dietrich Bonhoeffer)

When Levi and Peter were called to follow, there was no doubt that Jesus meant business. Both of them were to leave everything and follow. Only one thing was required in each case: to rely on Christ's word, and to cling to it as offering greater security than all the securities in the world. The forces which tried to interpose themselves between the word of Jesus and the response of obedience were as formidable then as they are today. Reason and conscience, responsibility and piety all stood in the way, and even the law and 'scriptural authority' itself were obstacles to the extremes of 'enthusiasms'. But the call of Jesus made short work of these barriers. That call was the Word of God himself, and all that it required was single-minded obedience.

Scripture (1John 2:24-27)

Let what you heard in the beginning remain in you; as long as what you heard in the beginning remains in you, you will remain in the Son and in the Father. And the promise he made you himself is eternal life. So much have I written to you about those who are trying to lead you astray. But as for you, the anointing you received from him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you since the anointing he gave you teaches you everything, and since it is true, not false, remain in him just as it has taught you.

Thursday (Metropolitan Anthony)

We see that we cannot partake deeply of the life of God unless we change profoundly. It is therefore essential that we should go to God in order that he should transform and change us. Instead of spending our lives looking in all directions, we should follow one direction only. Conversion is turning away from a great many things which we value solely because they are very pleasant or expedient for us. The first impact of conversion is to modify our sense of values: God being at the centre of all, everything acquires a new position and a new depth. All that is God's, all that belongs to him is positive and real. Everything that is outside him has no value or meaning.

Scripture

Jesus said, "No one can come to me unless drawn by the Father who sent me, and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets: They will be taught by God, and to hear the teaching of the Father, and learn from it, is to come to me. Not that anybody has seen the Father, except the one who comes from God: he has seen the Father. I tell you most solemnly, everybody who believes has eternal life. Your fathers ate manna in the desert and they are dead; I am the living bread which has come down from heaven. Anyone who eats this bread will live for ever; and the bread that I shall give is my flesh for the life of the world.