

19<sup>th</sup> Sunday OT Year B  
August 11-12, 2018  
Readings: 1 Kings 19:4-8; Ephesians 4:30-5:2; John 6: 41-51

*Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God.*

“This is enough, O Lord! Take my life, for I am no better than my fathers.” Truthfully, I am grateful for this dose of honesty from Elijah, because more people can relate to it than we may wish to admit. When we find ourselves in tough spots, sometimes we say things that we regret, looking back, years later. It is impossible to know if Elijah regretted his words spoken beneath the Broom tree, but they were the words of a broken and exhausted man.

In Catholic terminology we call it despair, and from one perspective it is a part of the valley of tears through which we all walk while on earth. In another sense, it can be a serious sin, a form of turning one’s back on God. Every now and then, “giving up” seems like the best option, be it giving up on a job, a school, a relationship, or seemingly as with Elijah, perhaps even on life itself.

In a society that saw 45,000 people take their own lives in 2016, we know that this problem is growing; the statistics are going in the wrong direction. Others while not going to that extreme, certain have lost all zeal for life. In part, it is natural as we age, for a person of faith to desire to be with the Lords, because we know that we were not created to live forever. That desire is hardly sinful; it is understandable, as is the lack of enthusiasm that some of our elderly people feel when trying to recover from illness or surgery.

But let us break down this account a little more closely. First, an angel of the Lord touched Elijah, ordering him to get up and eat. The angel was quite directive and persistent. He came back a second time at which point the nourishment in his stomach enabled him to regain both strength and a sense of purpose.

One key take away for me is the importance of having others in my life who regularly check in. Isolation is often the first step towards a breakdown of one's mental health. The best antidote to isolation is to be involved in the lives of others, especially in families. If involvement is misconstrued as invasion, we have a problem.

For example, when young people tell their parents that they cannot enter their rooms- we have a problem. Obviously, they should knock, but no one's room is off limits to parents; this is not a rental agreement for an apartment. Being part of a family necessitates access and engagement.

Secondly, the best antidote when we feel "down" for whatever reason(s) is to become more involved in the lives of others. Do not focus so much on yourself; get out and do something for another. Even if it does not change your circumstances substantially, you have taken your mind off of your problems for the time being.

Thirdly, Jesus Christ must be our very closest friend. Friendship with Jesus does not end after First Communion preparation; it is a quality that is ageless, based upon the true meaning of friendship. Jesus truly desires the best for us; he wills our good. Our friendship with him frames all our actions. At the opening homily of his pontificate in 2005, Pope Benedict XVI: "There is nothing more beautiful than to know [Christ] and to speak to others of our friendship with him...Only in this friendship [with Christ] are the doors of life opened wide."<sup>1</sup>

Our hope is in the power of God working through the hearts of people. This is the hope that makes our lives complete, and we look no farther than Jesus Christ. Nothing can substitute for this love.

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<sup>1</sup> MASS FOR THE BEGINNING OF THE PETRINE MINISTRY OF THE BISHOP OF ROME HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI St. Peter's Rome 24 April 2005

Elijah overcame despair with the help of God's grace. St. Paul reminded us in our second reading that we should not grieve the Holy Spirit of God by means of our bitterness, anger and reviling. Despair is often preceded by these outbursts. Our Catechism teaches that despair results when we cease "to hope for his personal salvation from God, for help in attaining it or for the forgiveness of his sins. Despair is contrary to God's goodness, to his justice—for the Lord is faithful to his promises—and to his mercy."<sup>2</sup>

I really cannot recall a time in my own life during which, when something was bothering me, someone did not ask me what was wrong. I think transparency is beneficial; I do not like to hide things. But it also signals just how many people care. If you are not naturally transparent, pray about it. Do not hesitate to share your burdens, even as you pray that they may not totally consume you.

Yes, Jesus truly is the living bread come down from heaven, bread that truly changes us. It gives us reason for hope. St. Paul tells us elsewhere "Rejoice in your hope, be patient in tribulation."  
(Romans 12:12) Jesus gives us the Eucharist so that we can become more like himself. The Food that Christ gives to us is his flesh for the life of the world. Let us always treasure this most precious gift and realize its power to transform our very lives.

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<sup>2</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, para. # 2091.