

Connecting with the Sunday Readings

Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time **Gospel Word**
John 6:41-51

We continue with the theme of being nourished by God as this nourishment comes through Jesus. Today's Gospel reading has a wonderful description of God's way of doing things. God draws us to Jesus, the Bread of Life. One comes to faith and faith in Jesus brings us eternal life. It states that all will be taught by God. When talking about himself as the Bread of Life, Jesus notes that those who accept this remarkable truth have to be led to this belief by God. It is one of the simplest but most complicated messages of the Gospel. Simple for those who have been drawn— totally mystifying to those who have not.

—by David Thomas, PhD, Co-Director, The Bethany Family Institute

Living the Word

As Catholics, we believe that Jesus truly is the bread or nourishment of our lives. We also believe that we who eat of his flesh (the Eucharist) will enjoy the fullness of eternal life with God. But we also wonder about those who don't. What is their fate? What is their relationship with God? Are they drawn into a relationship with God?

But not everyone sees God in Jesus or anywhere else. Polls are taken that try to measure and describe people's religious faith or belief. Never do the polls conclude that religious faith is universal. There are always some holdouts. We say that some "believe" and some don't. Do we conclude by this judgment that some are nourished by God and some aren't? This assessment of another's faith is extremely judgmental— probably more judgmental of God's love than of the non-believer's faith. To listen to some believers, it seems they conclude that heaven, or eternal life, is given to a few, to those who are most like them.

Our Catholic faith clearly holds that God wills the salvation of all people. God does not pick and choose. God loves everyone. God also invites everyone into a loving relationship with the Trinity. How this happens is not obvious to the human mind nor is it controlled by human pronouncements. We can neither know the mind of God nor control how God might act.

In today's Gospel reading we are lifted into a view that attempts to look at things as God does. We see God drawing all people to Jesus, the Bread of Life. But we also know that many do not take that spiritual journey. They move along a variety of ways to God. In the end, we have to confess that much of this is wrapped in mystery. But that's not to be thought of as a loss. What would truly be a loss would be to narrow our perspective to a point where God's universal connection with all humanity is denied. Religious wars have been waged on this terrible misconception. Again, God is the God of all, loving everyone in ways we might not be able to grasp.

One-line Prayer

God of all, may I live convinced that you draw all people to yourself. Amen.