

Why are you murmuring?

As you all know, we are still reflecting on the teachings found in John, Chapter 6: that Jesus is our bread of life.

Chapter 6 of St. John's gospel is dedicated to the Eucharist. John prepared the ground for this teaching by first feeding a fainting, famished people with bread and fish which they did not pay for. He then gradually led them to discussions of God's generosity to their ancestors in the desert where God fed them with Manna, quail and water from the rock. He opened their minds to God's grace and their dependency on God's generosity. The important teaching herein is that despite your strength and your wealth, you will still die of hunger if the Lord himself does not feed you.

Evidence of which is Elijah, the greatest of all the prophets, fainted under the weight of his ministry, only to be revived through the food God sent to him; with strength of which he survived forty days without eating anything else. With this food from God, Elijah was able to journey through the desert to Mount Horeb.

Each Sunday of these six weeks, the gospel reading will be preceded by a first reading on the Eucharist, with evidence of God's generosity to his people as is testified in the Hebrew Bible which we call the Old Testament.

Last week, the Lord raised down food for them from Heaven in forms of manna and quail. Exodus 16:12-15.

The week before last, a man from Baal-shalishah brought twenty barley loaves and fresh grain with which Elisha, the man of God, fed a multitude. 2Kings 4:42. Today the Lord feeds his faithful prophet even through the mouth of a raven bird. These testimonies of old, are only recalled in our time so that we may know that God is patient and provides for all his creation, especially those whom he created in his image and likeness.

Today, the Lord Jesus, having prepared his audience with enough food and teachings, decided to teach them the core of his message: "I am the living bread that came down from Heaven. Whoever eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world." John 6:51. When the people heard this, they murmured! Did they not understand God's providence from of old? Have they not seen the signs he performs? Did they not partake of the bread which he multiplied? Maybe these are a little "out of place" questions. Maybe the appropriate inquiry is why did they travel the distance to see him?

What are they looking for in the person of Jesus? Are they satisfied with what they got? They are looking for food. They don't care much about his teachings or at least the majority of them want food. They endure long sermons in order to get to the food part. He had been curing the sick, casting our demons, raising the dead and teaching with authority. The only time they wanted to make him king was when he fed them food to their own satisfaction. Jn:6-15. So, they wanted food, not knowledge.

But, why did they murmur?

1. They murmured because Jesus was talking too long and too much and no food was forth coming.
2. He was speaking to his own people who knew him from childhood. They expected him to be ordinary like them but his teaching them with power and authority blurred their vision of goodness inherent in him.
3. Jesus' family background of lowly estate was a stumbling block for their accepting him. If the Messiah had appeared as a splendid overachieving monarch, they might have been willing to accept him as the "Son of God." But, the concept of an impoverished, socially unconnected Christ whose main followers were illiterate fishermen and women, without an army and no academic background. Such a messiah was difficult to be accepted. This is not a contradiction to #2. John the Apostle testified: the power from above is needed if one is to "believe in his name". John 1:12.
4. The idea of eating flesh, human flesh, is very "un-Jewish." Genesis 9:6.
5. The people were HUNGRY, hostile and without patience. The only thing they can do in the absence of food, is to murmur.

The act of murmuring is not just a sign of rejection, it is rejection itself. The phrase "is this not Jesus?" is a phrase which is accompanied with hand gesture intended to humiliate a person with latent sneer. They detasted him with arrogance. But, human arrogance cannot prevent God's mission of the universal salvation. No human wealth, knowledge or power can assure life forever except the Body of Christ.

For us, the church that gathers here in Fruita, why are you murmuring?

Why do some of us have a wealth of indignation and sneer others?

Why do we reject the teachings of Christ or sometimes refuse to give it a home in our hearts?

What is our relationship with the Holy Eucharist?

Do we believe in the body and blood Christ offered to us under the appearance of bread and wine?

Do we accept the unity and communion it brings?

Do we participate in the thanksgiving?

Do we savor the joy of salvation and forgiveness?

The truth is that not everyone is murmuring.

Most have seen the glory and salvation of our God.

They are already living a life of thanksgiving.