

FROM THE DESK OF **Fr. Julius**



Brothers and Sisters in Christ; Grace and peace!

Following the reflections of the last two Sundays, today's liturgy of the word continues with the Bread of Life discourse. Throughout John's Gospel, he constantly stresses the need for believing in Christ above one's desires and one's own "reasoning." When our Lord, Jesus asks us to eat his flesh, that mystical assurance promises the faithful, eternal life.

Our first reading depicts the physical and spiritual hopelessness experienced by the prophet Elijah as he seems reconciled to give up his life! Miraculously nourished by an angel of the Lord, Elijah resumes his forty-day journey to Mount

Horeb and returns to his prophetic ministry. This reading luminously prefigures our Gospel reading this weekend. In the second reading, while St. Paul presents Jesus to the Ephesians as a *"sacrificial offering to God for a fragrant aroma,"* he encourages them about using only respectable conduct amongst themselves; that any unpleasantness or animosity be banished, giving life only to that greater good, that fragrant aroma.

In the Gospel, St. John continues his thesis of Jesus' discourse in the synagogue at Capernaum, after his miraculous feeding of the five thousand. During this discourse, Jesus reveals himself as the true *"Bread of Life that came down from Heaven,"* the new and perfect manna. This means that the Holy Eucharist essentially gives us a share in eternal life while we are still on earth, with the vow that if we eat of this bread, we will live forever. Even though our senses suggest only bread and wine, we must let faith make us firm. The very wonder of partaking and consuming our Lord's body, blood, soul, and divinity, as we take our turn in the Communion line, is the pivotal and central crux upon which our faith orbits. Back then, as now, some of Jesus' followers turn away when he explains the source of his mysterious power and his heavenly origin.

How can we not abandon ourselves to Christ's presence in the Holy Eucharist? We may want to reflect with these words of St. Padre Pio after receiving our Lord in Holy Communion:

Stay with me, Lord, because I am weak, and I need your strength, so that I may not fall so often.

Stay with me, Lord, for you are my light, and without you, I am in darkness.

Stay with me, Lord, for I desire to love you very much, and always be in your company.

Stay with me, Lord, for as poor as my soul is, I want it to be a place of consolation for you, a nest of love.

Stay with me, Lord, for it is necessary to have you present so that I do not forget you. You know how easily I abandon you. Amen.

Blessed Sunday!