

19th Sunday B

Aug. 9, 2009

We all have bad days: the power goes out...the car won't start...the boss is grouchy...we get a ticket...we have a stupid argument...or send a careless email...or drop a fly ball...or get lost and show up late. Will it matter in a week or a month? Usually not. We whine a little, then tell ourselves: "build a bridge and get over it. Put a rubber band around your head and snap out of it!" Bad day; life goes on.

But sometimes, our pain is a lot more than a temporary irritation. Sometimes the pressure is overwhelming and there's nothing we can do: our job has been eliminated....a loved one is taken from us....the marriage is collapsing...the cancer has returned.. ...our best friend has betrayed us.

Bad things do happen to good people--like Elijah in the book of Kings. He gets into big trouble by showing the that the prophets of Queen Jezebel are fakes. And for that, the Queen sends him a pretty scary message: "by tomorrow evening, Elijah, you will be dead." Elijah manages to escape into the desert, but he has reached the end of his strength. Elijah prays, "This is enough, Lord! Take my life!" Elijah, a spiritual person, a man of God, wants to leave this world.

People get to that point sometimes--including our youth. After accidents, suicide is the second leading cause of death for teenagers. It's a dangerous temptation. *A permanent solution for a temporary problem, as we say.*

Elijah lies down in a desert, without hope, longing to fall asleep and not wake up, but now something unexpected happens: God sends an angel to touch him. Twice. "Touched by an angel." (Sounds like a good name for a TV show. At least better than "CSI Amelia!") The angel gives Elijah food and water as if from heaven, and he is able to survive another 40 days in the desert until he meets God on the mountain.

850 years later, Jesus of Nazareth will also live in the desert for 40 days, and He will also face temptation. God the father sends angels will minister to Jesus. After the last supper, in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus realizes that he will be executed the next day. "Let this cup pass from me," he cries out. Again, an angel appears to strengthen him. [pause]

It seems to me that we are building the new church so that St. Bernadette Parish can become 1000 families of angels. That new building, just 15 weeks from opening, is our opportunity to become a powerful community of welcoming and concern, a parish where God's love touches struggling youth, adults and elderly through us-- His angels.

Meanwhile, we are privileged to be at Catholic Mass: the hearth cake and jug of water that Elijah received are replaced by the Body and Blood, the Actual Presence, of the Risen Jesus Christ. The voice of the angel telling Elijah to "get up" is now the voice of Jesus, inviting you and me to come to him. The food that helped him to continue for 40 more days has become the heavenly food to help us live forever.

Whether we are having a hard DAY or a hard LIFE, there is strength and hope for us at today's Eucharist. God provides for our journey. Taste and see how good the Lord is. And when we return home this day and travel through the coming week, may there always be angels along our path!