

## 19<sup>th</sup> SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (YEAR B)

The bread of life discourse in the sixth chapter of John's gospel, through which we are journeying over several Sundays, is often only associated with Holy Communion. The first part of the discourse, however, is concerned also with the revelation of God in the person of Jesus Christ. Last week, for example, we reflected upon Jesus satisfying our spiritual hunger, and that when we truly place our faith and trust in him we do not need anything else. As Jesus proclaimed: *'I am the bread of life; He who comes to me will never be hungry; he who believes in me will never thirst.'*

I would like to focus this week upon the following words spoken by Jesus in today's gospel: *'No one can come to me unless he is drawn by the Father who sent me.'* Do you ever stop and wonder as to why you are drawn to Jesus? Today Jesus gives us the answer to that question. The real reason you seek after him is because your heavenly Father is drawing you to him. Our life of faith in Jesus is not our own initiative, it is the Father's initiative. God the Father has chosen you and I and bestowed upon us the gift of faith, so that we may come to know His Son as our Lord and Saviour.

Jesus goes on to say in today's gospel that *'it is written in the prophets: "They will all be taught by God," and to hear the teaching of the Father, and learn from it, is to come to me.'* Here he is talking about a personal relationship with God into which all of us are invited. I found one commentary on this text particularly helpful: *'This quotation from Isaiah comes in today's reading, "They will all be taught by God." Its context is the personal relationship of each believer to the Lord. The Lord will sow in our hearts individually the knowledge of himself, so that each of us has a personal, secret link, to be cultivated by prayer. If we listen to the Father and learn from him, we come to Jesus, who has seen the Father. So in this reading the emphasis is on listening, seeing, believing the revelation of the Father. This is no abstract set of truths but a personal knowing, just as we know those we love on earth.'*<sup>1</sup>

This makes sense, I think, of why it sometimes feels difficult to talk to others about our life of faith. Our inner life with the Lord is something unique to each of us, and is, as the commentary says, *'a personal, secret link.'* Our relationship with God goes to the very depths of who we are, depths to which no other human being can accompany us. They are depths that only God knows within us, and places that can only be reached with God in prayer. I am reminded of the following teaching of Jesus: *'When you pray go to your private room and, when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in that secret place, and your Father who sees all that is done in secret will reward you.'* Here, I believe, Jesus refers not only a physical room, but also to that private room within our hearts, in which God calls us to meet with Him in prayer.

The final chapter of the Catechism of the Catholic Church is dedicated entirely to Christian Prayer and is well worth a read. Reassuringly, it begins by explaining how *"humility" is the foundation of prayer. Only when we humbly acknowledge that "we do not know how to pray as we ought" are we ready to receive freely the gift of prayer. "Man is a beggar before God."*<sup>2</sup> Reminding us of Jesus' encounter with the woman at the well, it goes on to explain how *'the wonder of prayer is revealed beside the well where we come seeking water: there, Christ comes to meet every human being. It is he who first seeks us and ask us for a drink. Jesus thirsts; his asking arises from the depths of God's desire for us. Whether we realise it or not, prayer is the encounter of God's thirst with ours. God thirsts that we may thirst for him.'*<sup>3</sup> In the depths of your being, then, God thirsts for you, so that you may thirst for Him!

God bless,

Fr Andy

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<sup>1</sup> Universalis, Commentary on the Readings at Mass for the 19<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B.

<sup>2</sup> Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) 2559. Cf. Romans 8:26 and St. Augustine.

<sup>3</sup> CCC 2560. Cf. St. Augustine.