

HOMILY – 19TH SUNDAY OF THE YEAR – 12 AUGUST 2018

In the Gospel today, Jesus teaches us that He is here to give and not to take. That God is constantly giving of Himself to us. This is crowned by the whole experience of Jesus giving Himself to us in Holy Communion. We in turn are here to receive that Communion from God so that we give of ourselves, in the cause of the Kingdom of God. The call of Jesus is for us to take Him into our lives.

In the first reading, Elijah, the Prophet, is commanded by an angel to take a meal of scones and water, so that He may give Himself in the cause of true prophesy. Fasting is rewarded by having the energy to do what is right. The whole of life is about giving and taking. The whole of the Gospel is about God giving to us. We, in return, are taking but not always taking what is right, sin is taking unjustly. Herod, in envy, sought to take the child Jesus and kill Him.

John the Baptist gives of himself in Baptising the Son of God, but, the devil seeks to pretend to give Jesus all that lies before him but in truth seeks to take from His divine power.

Judas Iscariot takes thirty pieces of silver, in exchange for Christ Jesus being arrested. Pontius Pilate gives Barabbas freedom in exchange he commands the Jews, "Take Jesus and crucify Him".

But, as we know, Jesus in contrast to our disordered world, comes to give us His entire life. (John 2) – "God loves the world so much that He gave His only son to be our saviour".

In last week's Gospel, after the feeding of the five thousand, the crowds, impressed by Jesus's great miracle, were demanding more food, "Come on! Give us more!". Jesus in return warns the world not to work only for the food, that cannot last, that cannot satisfy. 'Work for the food of eternal life'. In other words, strive for the Bread of Life, Jesus, on the Body and Blood, Holy Communion.

So, the question we must ask ourselves is, what am I giving Jesus in my life? The offertory gifts are a sign of our giving and this is a very generous parish. But what of my whole life on earth? Do I give myself generously to God? Prayer is a sign of a giving person. Do I give generously of myself in my own vocation? Do I give of my time to be a good listener? To care for an elderly relative or put energy into voluntary works of mercy?

At the Last Supper, Jesus reminds His Apostles, by the washing of their feet, that you can only be with Me if you are willing to serve, you can only truly sit at the table with Me if you are truly committed to serving God and neighbour. If you are here only to take, to deceive, to spoil, then, like Judas Iscariot, you cannot be My disciple.

So, when we receive Jesus in Holy Communion, who gives Himself to us, fully, body, blood, soul and divinity, we in return, secretly, in our hearts, promise to give ourselves generously whenever Jesus needs us, out in the world. Holy Communion is our spiritual food. God knows we need that spiritual sustenance to get through life.

This week I met Neil Pettigrew, who tells me he has been receiving Holy Communion for 85 years. The Bread of Life from Christ, helping him to be a better person and preparing him for the Kingdom of Heaven. I pray that we all see Jesus that way and remember Jesus's words – "I am the Bread of Life".

Amen