

Reflection—Cathy Dempsey—8/9/2015

For a long time I've really appreciated our first reading we had today from 1 Kings. As a reminder, what has happened in the passage right before the one we just hear was that Queen Jezebel has sent the army chasing Elijah out into the desert, because Elijah's prophesying was not at all what she wanted to hear. He had spoken truth to power, and now he was running for his life. I've had my share of times when I felt the way Elijah did in that passage. Not that I've ever been in the situation where I was running for my life from people who didn't like what I had to say. But I've had plenty of times when it seemed like everything I was doing was going nowhere, that all my efforts were in vain, and I had just had it.

It's at that point in his life, Elijah sits down under a tree and asks God to just let him die. "It is enough now, O Lord," he says. "Take away my life, for I am no better than my ancestors." And then he just falls asleep under the tree, and hopes he wakes up dead. In my own life, I've been fortunate never to be at the point where I wished I could die. My experience has never been that severe. When I get fed up and tired of trying, usually I just plop down on the couch and watch TV all evening.

What happens next to Elijah, though, is what gives me hope. God sends him food and water. The angel wakes him and tells him to eat. So Elijah eats, and then he goes right back to sleep. Then God, not being one to be easily discouraged, sends the angel to Elijah again to wake him and tell him to eat, "otherwise the journey will be too much for you." I think a bit of God's sense of humor is showing there. God refuses to accept Elijah's resignation from his

position as prophet. It's like God is saying, "Okay, you've had your little pity party. Now get up, and I'm going to give you what you need in order to do what I've called you to do."

So then Elijah gets up, eats, drinks, and then he has the strength to walk for forty days and forty nights to the mountain of God.

Whenever I hear that passage, I always think about the food God sent to Elijah. It wasn't a big lavish feast with a whole variety of great tasting and beautifully presented food. The Scripture says it was a cake baked on hot stones, and a jar of water. Now I haven't done any research on this, but I don't think that where it talks about there being a "cake," that it was anything like a Twinkie or a HoHo. No sugary treat with cream filling. I'm thinking it's probably just a plain "cake" of ordinary bread. Just plain old ordinary bread and water. Pretty dull and boring. But that plain bread and water was enough to strengthen Elijah to walk for forty days and nights.

God always feeds us. God supplies our every need. Jesus tells us in today's Gospel that he is the Bread of Life—he is the food we need. Sometimes the food is interesting and exciting and tasty and yummy. And that's a blessing and we need that kind of food sometimes.

We're very fortunate here at QAC to have lively, engaging liturgies with uplifting music, a strong and caring community, and interesting and inspiring homilies. (Fortunately for me, this is not a homily, so hopefully the expectations aren't quite so high for my speaking).

Worshipping in this community is almost always a feast for my soul.

Sometimes, though, we just don't feel like eating. Sometimes when we're sick, food just doesn't seem appealing. We only eat because we know we need the nourishment, and it all

just tastes bland and boring. When I was younger, I used to hear people talk about going to church, saying, “You only get out of it what you put into it. If you’re not going to put your whole heart and soul into it, you might as well not go.”

I think God sees things a little differently. I think God invites us to the table no matter how we are feeling; God invites us to pray in silence and solitude, and to pray in community with words and music. Sometimes we may come away from prayer feeling peaceful, joyful, and satisfied; sometimes we may still feel whatever pain or sorrow we’re carrying; sometimes we may not feel anything in particular, good or bad. But no matter how we feel, there is no doubt that God has fed us, God has given us the strength we need for the journey.