

The words for this week are **eat** and **taste**, and **see**. The context for the words is fear and distress. What is to be feared is the LORD and even of that fear, the LORD will deliver the Faithful.

Pope John-Paul II's Apostolic Letter, *Rosarium Virginiae Mariae*, does not cite any specific Scripture from the Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time. The following section fits no special readings. Mentioning *nourish* relates to **eat**, **taste**, and **see**.

The opening and closing

37. At present, in different parts of the Church, there are many ways to introduce the Rosary. In some places, it is customary to begin with the opening words of Psalm 70: "O God, come to my aid; O Lord, make haste to help me," as if to *nourish* those who are praying a humble awareness of their own insufficiency. In other places, the Rosary begins with the recitation of the Creed, as if to make the profession of faith the basis of the contemplative journey about to be undertaken. These and similar customs, to the extent that they prepare the mind for contemplation, are all equally legitimate. The Rosary is then ended with a prayer for the intentions of the Pope, as if to expand the vision of the one praying to embrace all the needs of the Church. It is precisely in order to encourage this ecclesial dimension of the Rosary that the Church has seen fit to grant indulgences to those who recite it with the required dispositions.

If prayed in this way, the Rosary truly becomes a spiritual itinerary in which Mary acts as Mother, Teacher and Guide, sustaining the faithful by her powerful intercession. Is it any wonder, then, that the soul feels the need, after saying this prayer and experiencing so profoundly the motherhood of Mary, to burst forth in praise of the Blessed Virgin, either in that splendid prayer the *Salve Regina* or in the *Litany of Loreto*? This is the crowning moment of an inner journey, which has brought the faithful into living contact with the mystery of Christ and his Blessed Mother.

1 Kings 19:4-8

verse 4 Elijah went a day's journey into the desert...

Elijah is seen as a new Moses, hidden in the desert. At the Transfiguration, the relationship between Jesus and Moses and Elijah is set out.¹ The point is that the "slings and arrows of outrageous fortune" are worth it in the Christian acceptance.

¹ Kathryn L. Roberts, "God, Prophet, and King: Eating and Drinking on the Mountain in First Kings 18:41," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 62, No. 4 (October 2000), 634-635.

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verse 4 until he came to a broom tree and sat beneath it.
He prayed for *death*, saying:
 “This is enough, O LORD!
Take my life, for I am no better than my fathers.”

At the time, Elijah was fleeing from Queen Jezebel. Moses had similar sentiments, “If this is the way you are going to treat me, put me to death at once, if I have found favor in your sight, and do not let me see my misery” (Num 11:15 NRSV). The prophet Tobit had a similar idea, “Command my spirit to be taken up from me so that I may be released” (Tobit 3:6).² These prophets, like Jesus, suffered in their revivification of the covenant.

verse 5 He lay down and fell asleep under the broom tree,
 but then an angel touched him and ordered him to get up and **eat**.

verse 7 After he **ate** and drank, he lay down again,
 but the angel of the LORD came back a second time,
 touched him, and ordered,
 “Get up and **eat**, else the journey will be too long for you!”

verse 8 He got up, **ate**, and drank:
 then strengthened by that food,
 he walked *forty* days and *forty* nights to the mountain of God,
 Horeb.

A scholar notes that the *forty* is a “rounding,” similar to that found in other places in Sacred Scripture. “I shall make it rain on earth for *forty* days and *forty* nights ...” (Gen 7:4). “The Israelites **ate** manna for *forty* years ...” (Exod 16:35). “... but, as for you, your dead bodies will fall in this desert and your children will be nomads in the desert for *forty* years, bearing the consequences of your faithlessness ...” (Num 14:33). “And at once the Spirit drove him into the desert and he remained there for *forty* days ...” (Mark 1:12-13).³

² Anatheia Portier-Young, “Alleviation of Suffering in the Book of Tobit: Comedy, Community, and Happy Endings,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 63, No. 1 (January 2001) 43,

³ Craig A. Evans, “Jesus’ Action in the Temple: Cleansing or Portent of Destruction?” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 51, No. 2 (April 1989), 266-267. The Biblical translations are from Henry Wansbrough, General Editor, The New Jerusalem Bible (New York: Doubleday, 1985).

Psalm 34:2-3, 4-5, 6-7, 8-9

The antiphon fits well.

verse 9a **Taste** and **see** the goodness of the Lord.

Taste and **see** is a mixed metaphor, something that never bothered me until my professors began complaining about my using mixed metaphors. These are two different senses for reaching God. Bread nourishes all the senses.

Interestingly, **Psalm 34** is an acrostic with including an intellectual as well as an emotional bent.⁴

verse 5 I sought the LORD, and he answered me
 and delivered me from all my *fears*.

verse 7 When the *afflicted* man called out, the LORD heard,
 and from all his distress he saved him.

Saint Jerome translates *afflicted* with *pauper*, or pauper or poor. While the Poor Clare nuns may not be *afflicted*, they are *pauper*. Hidden in their monastery, they are heard by God.

verse 8 The angel of the LORD encamps
 around those who *fear* him and *delivers* them.

Ephesians 4:30—5:2

Versification is a later addition to Sacred Scripture. That the Lectionary moves to gather in two verses from the next chapter, then, is all right.

verse 31 All bitterness, fury, anger, *shouting*, and reviling
 must be removed from you, along with all malice.

Shouting has special meaning for the Newport News Poor Clare Monastery Daily Mass. When a relatively new convert told me how much he enjoyed the chapel singing, I mentioned the noise. His response was that God must have been allowing that noise for some good reason. Indeed.

⁴ Hanan Eshel and John Strugnell, "Alphabetical Acrostics in Pre-Tannaitic Hebrew," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 62, No. 3 (July 2000), 443.

verses 5:1-2 So be imitators of God, as beloved children, and *live* in love,
as Christ loved us and handed himself over for us
as a sacrificial offering to God for a fragrant aroma.

To *live* in love carries the English sense of *amble*, where the Latin uses *ambulate*. *Live* seems a little more intense than *walk* or *amble*.

John 6:51

verse 51 I am the living bread that came down from heaven, says the Lord;
whoever **eats** this bread will live forever.

John 6:41—51

verse 41 The Jews murmured about Jesus *because* he said,
“I am the bread that came down from heaven,”

Jerome translates *because* with *quia* that I might translate *that*. Later, in verse 46, *quia* is translated with *that*.

verse 44 No one can come to me unless the father who sent me *draw* him,
and I will raise him on the last day.

The grammarian points out that *draw* carries with it the meaning of *drag* in the Greek. Saint Jerome uses *traxerit* that brings to mind *traction*.

I wondered whether these readings were used in the Funeral Rites,⁵ but only verse 51 is.

verse 45 It is written in the prophets:
They shall all be taught by God.
Everyone *who listens to my Father* and learns from him comes to me.

⁵ International Commission on English in the Liturgy: A Joint Commission of Catholic Bishops' Conferences, The Roman Ritual: Revised by Decree of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council and published by Authority of Pope Paul IV: Order of Christian Funerals: Including Appendix 2: Cremation: Approved for use in the Dioceses of the United States of America by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops and Confirmed by the Apostolic See (New Jersey: Catholic Book Publishing Co., 1998)

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... Because of this the soul, as it takes its delight in the sole contemplation of Him Who Is, will be stirred by none of the things that awaken pleasure through the senses.”

St. Ambrose, Bishop and Doctor (339-397): “*Give us this day our daily bread. ... But the Latin calls *daily bread*, what the Greeks call *bread for the coming day*. ... If it be daily bread why do you receive it after a year, as the Greeks do in the East?*” Both are correct, daily bread is also bread for the coming day.

St. Augustine, Bishop and Doctor (354-430): “The rock was struck twice with a rod. The two blows signify the two beams of the Cross. *This then is the bread which cometh down from heaven; that if any man eat of it he may not die ...*”

...

It *profiteth nothing*, as they understood it: they had understood His Body as though He were speaking of a carcase [sic], to be cut into small pieces, or as sold in the meatshops; not as made living by the Spirit.”

St. Cyril of Alexandria, Bishop and Doctor (+444): “The Angels beheld Him, and wondered. Heaven saw it, and was afraid. Creation looked, and trembled.”

To engage what contemporary scholars are writing, As the bread of God, he (Jesus) gives “life to the *world*” (John 6:33, 51). He is “the light of the *world*” (8:12; 9:5; 12:46, and 11:9).⁶

In the final analysis, these readings point to a purpose in suffering. **Eat, taste, and see** are about strength in the face of difficulties. In **1 Kings**, Elijah sets out on a forty day journey to Mount Horeb, like the life-long journey of the Faithful to the Jerusalem of their souls. **Psalms 34** is about deliverance from fear and distress. **Ephesians** is about loving through the sacrificial offering that is Christ. Finally, the Gospel according to **John** is about Jesus being the Bread of Life for the world. Love conquers the indignities of the world through suffering into eternal glory with Jesus.

For an overview of sources used see the Appendix file.

⁶ Stanley B. Marrow, “*Κοσμος in John*,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 64, No. 1 (January 2002), 97.