

NINETEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (8/8-9/2009)

1 kings 19/4-8, Psalm 34, Ephesians 4/30-5/2/2009, John 6/41-51

This is the third installment of the sixth chapter of John's Gospel.

As happens so often in John's Gospel - and in our own lives - Jesus is misunderstood when he begins to speak of himself as the bread that comes from heaven.

His listeners are in a literal mood, so they take his word literally and therefore miss its true significance. They want to know by what right he is claiming such a personal distinction.

Jesus is in no mood to accept their criticism; he says, "*Stop murmuring among yourselves.*"

Then once again, as he does in other passages in *John*, he tells them of his connection to God, the Father.

I always think that this point is one of the most important in the entire Bible.

If you get nothing else from the Scriptures, get this truth: Jesus and the Father are one.

The people have a hard time accepting that "faith fact" because they cannot imagine that a mere mortal, like Jesus, whose mother and father they know, can be one with God.

If we are honest with ourselves, we might also admit that this divine union poses problems for us as well.

That God would take on human flesh and live among us - and then die ignominiously for us - strains every fiber of our ordinary understanding.

If it is true, then Jesus is the key figure in all of history.

Any attempt to relate to God has to go through Jesus.

For those billions of people who do not know Jesus nor even have heard of him, we think that Jesus is still the one who has to broker their way into the Father's eternal life.

If not directly as with us believers, then indirectly through creation and through the various cultures and belief systems that have been in place.

This five week foray into the sixth chapter of John's Gospel is a challenging one.

It makes us reflect on truths that we may feel more comfortable keeping at a distance.

A friend of mine, by all logical reasoning, should get a physical check-up soon since he hasn't had one in so long.

But he refuses to make the appointment; I think he fears that the doctors will find out something he is not ready for!

No amount of persuasion will convince him to go for the exam either.

Perhaps we are that way when we get drawn closer to the Lord; He scares us.

We may be afraid of the demands He will make, the changes that we will have to undergo.

So we spiritually bury our heads in the sand, and life goes on swimmingly.

Or so we think.

Jesus would like to reassure us: the alternative is not bad, not bad at all!

Trust him.