

LET'S GET COOKIN'!
13th Sunday in OT: June 26, 2022
Deacon Robb Pailthorpe

I like to cook. I do most of the meal prep in our house with the exception of the baking... Diane is definitely the expert when it comes to cookies, bars and sweets. Each month, I look forward to getting my Food Network magazine to pour over the latest recipes... is this something that I can handle with no weird ingredients or is this dish better left to a professional chef? Cooking... being the master of the kitchen is fun... the cook is in charge, tailoring the additions of spices to personal taste with the finished dish being something that tastes wonderful to whom it is served. Oh, I've had my mishaps as many cooks can attest... the time I made muffins using baking soda instead of baking powder... or the time I accidentally made a sugar-free pumpkin pie for Thanksgiving... neither tasted very good!

In our Liturgy of the Word today, Saints Luke and Paul and the prophet Jeremiah serve up a recipe for salvation. Let's set the table

with looking at the message from St. Luke. Jesus has fulfilled his ministry and is headed to the holy city of Jerusalem. Along the way, they come to a Samaritan village where they hope to find a meal and a place to rest. Upon learning that Jesus and his disciples are headed to Jerusalem, the band is turned away for the Samaritans and the Jews have an ongoing feud about who worships the so-called right way and right place. Living up to their reputation as the “Sons of Thunder,” brothers James and John offer to call down “fire from heaven to consume them.” Jesus expresses a sharp disapproval by rebuking the two men. Jesus understands that he has so much more to teach his disciples, especially that God’s coming kingdom welcomes all people, Jew and Gentile.

As they continue walking along the road, they encounter three people with the first saying he’ll follow Jesus anywhere. On the surface, we get this rather sad reply that Jesus has nowhere to rest. What Jesus means to convey to the person is the great sacrifices that one endures to follow the Messiah... to truly follow means leaving

behind house and home. In the next encounter, Jesus calls someone. The man seems willing but wants to first bury his father... Jesus says, "Let the dead bury the dead." The following of Christ must be the top priority. Even family obligations such as a funeral must take a back seat and be put into the proper perspective. Lastly, another says he will follow Jesus but he first wants to go home and tell everyone goodbye. Again, the man's priorities are out of line with Jesus telling the would-be disciple to look forward to what is the future, not to regret that which is in the past. Jesus' words are contrasted with those from Jeremiah in our first reading.

Elijah is becoming elderly and God directs him to pass on the prophetic message to the younger Elisha. Elijah finds him plowing with no less than 12 oxen! He throws his cloak over his shoulders signifying God's selection of Elisha as his next prophet. Elisha is startled, not yet fully understanding what has happened. He runs after Elijah who asks him, "Have I done anything to you?" Meaning, it's not me... it's God who has called you. Elisha now understands. He runs back to his oxen,

slaughters them, uses his plow for a fire and feeds his people. He has utterly destroyed his only means of a livelihood and in doing so, is 100-percent committed to God.

Finally, our second reading St. Paul highlights the war that rages within us between flesh and spirit. It is a battle I think most of us know all too well... we know we shouldn't do this or that but we do it anyway... a sin... drawing us away from God. The spirit encourages us to reconcile, attend Mass and partake in the Eucharist to bring us back to God. St. Paul doesn't pull any punches... in the verses immediately following, he offers us an extensive list of these sins of the flesh: fornication, gross indecency, sexual irresponsibility, idolatry, sorcery, feuds, wrangling, jealousy, bad temper, quarrels, disagreements, factions, envy, drunkenness and orgies. That's some list! St. Paul means to drive home an understanding that these negatives, things of the flesh, draw us away from the love of God. With conviction and passion, Paul almost begs us to lead a faith-filled life.

Let's take a pause here, lift the lid and give our spiritual stew a stir. What ingredients has Jesus added? Devotion. Loyalty. Love. A pinch of hardiness and a pound of humility. Yet to be added is a generous dash of forgiveness and a sprig of faith tied with a string of trust. Do we feel the Messiah is turning up the heat too high? Just right? Or is it tad low?

Scripture really and truly is a recipe for salvation. The meals – the stories that come from the Bible – they are food for our soul. This sanctuary is our dining room... the altar is where we – and God – prepare the most important drink and meal ever made.

And so, it's important for us, as stressed so clearly by St. Paul, to ask ourselves, to look at ourselves and wonder... am I the master of my own destiny, creating, adding and removing ingredients from my life to please me... adjusting the recipe to what I like and desire? Or – are we following scripture... the divine and holy recipe that feeds our souls. Are we trusting Jesus, learning from him how to live... understanding and accepting that he truly is the Master Chef of our lives.