



# Missionary Cooperation Plan

## Scripture Reflection

**August 8, 2021**

**Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (Year B)**

1 Kgs 19:4-8

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

Eph 4:30—5:2

Jn 6:41-51

In both the reading from 1 Kings and the Gospel from John, we hear about needing sustenance in order to have life. The prophet Elijah is exhausted, not just from fleeing through the desert to avoid the threat of Jezebel. He is shattered by an overwhelming sense of loneliness and loss. They had murdered all of the Lord's prophets and only Elijah remained. He is aimless and alone. He has no more energy for this work. He says, "Enough!" He just can't take the suffering anymore. But the angel of the Lord nudges him and tells him to eat and drink. It was this food, provided by God, that allows him to journey to the mountain of Horeb where he receives his next mission to anoint a new king of Israel and Elisha as the prophet to succeed him.

In the Gospel of John, the Jewish people are murmuring and criticizing Jesus's words. Jesus had recently fed the 5,000 with just a few loaves and fishes. People had begun to follow him in larger numbers because of this but they were pestering him with many questions. They did not understand the meaning of that miracle and they were confused by his teachings. He responds with the iconic words, "I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world." This leads to more confusion among the people who do not believe that He is the Messiah. They are thinking of the kind of bread that Jesus provided earlier. And they think that Jesus is the son of Joseph and Mary.

Jesus later says, "Just as the living Father sent me and I have life because of the Father, so also the one who feeds on me will have life because of me." (John 6:67) These teachings were very difficult to accept and some of Jesus' followers leave him. In this case perhaps they wanted more miracles that provide food like loaves of bread and fish. They did not accept Jesus as the Living Bread from Heaven. They do not know that Jesus Himself is sustenance and gives life. He gives of his very self, His flesh, to strengthen us for the journey. We are not alone, and we have been sent to bring this new life into the world.

This is Missionary Cooperation Plan weekend. We will learn more about the missionaries who proclaim the Good News of the Gospel and bring new life to the most remote places of the globe. They are imitators of Christ, and they share His flesh for the life of the world. They will soon ask for our support in the form of prayer and monetary donation. In these two key ways, we provide for their journeys. They need our spiritual support and to know that they are not alone in their mission. They also need to have the structure to provide the Bread of Life to remote and struggling communities. Funding will keep their ministries going, even in the midst of a global pandemic. The challenges are real around the world: the virus has caused terrible suffering, some areas are plagued with violent conflict, Christians are persecuted, and there is a real threat of famine. But with the Bread of Life, missionaries can continue their ministries with renewed strength. Let us feast upon the Bread of Life and share Him with the world.