

## *Food for the Journey*

**T**he Christian life is a journey that finds us between promise and fulfillment, hope and its realization, the initial experience of salvation and its completion. At the beginning of this journey, we are inevitably filled with joy, confident that we will reach our goal. But as the journey progresses and years pass, as the routine of daily life takes hold, we often find ourselves—like Israel of old—grumbling and complaining. God's promises don't unfold in the way we expected them to. Instead, unexpected crises and complications arise, and we grumble that the journey was not supposed to be this way. And, at darker moments, we may even wonder if we should have begun the journey of the Christian life at all.

Jesus knew how fickle the human heart can be. He understood that we see the signs but rarely perceive the reality. He understood that we want to accomplish the works of God but rarely comprehend how simple God's work of faith is. He understood that we need strength and nourishment for the journey, and so he offers himself as the bread of life.

In today's Gospel, Jesus points to himself as the true bread of life that God sent into the world. And so the singular work that God requires of us is simple; and there is no need to complicate it: *We must believe in the One whom God sent into the world.* The nourishment to accomplish this work and complete this journey has been given to us in the Word we hear and in the One whom we confess as Savior and Lord.

Yes, the Christian life is a journey, and the nourishment for this journey is the Word we hear and the Eucharist in which we participate each week. The Word of God is the bread of life that sustains us on the way, and the Eucharist is our participation in the Body and Blood of Christ.

Without the nourishment of the Word and the Eucharist, the journey becomes an occasion to grumble and complain. There is a temptation to grumble that the journey is too difficult, that God has not been faithful to his promises, and that God expects too much from us.

But in celebrating the Eucharist, we put the journey into perspective once more. In celebrating the Eucharist, we are nourished by Word and Sacrament. In celebrating this Eucharist, we receive the Word we hear, and the Word receives us. In celebrating this Eucharist, we receive the one

whom the Father sent into the world so that we may complete the journey and return to the Father. And so we ask for the grace to receive the Word and the Sacrament of the Eucharist so that we may do God's work in truth.

*Father Matera*