

In the Name of the Father, and of the ✠ Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

He stood bold and powerful, outnumbered by his enemies, and by God's grace Elijah prevailed. According to his prophecy, a drought and a famine came upon Israel. 450 prophets of Baal, and 400 prophets of Asherah failed to quell the suffering by invoking their idols and false gods. Elijah delivered the fiery sign of the only true God to shame the false prophets.

With the authority and power of God, with his own hand he slew the false prophets. At his prayer God brought much needed rain upon the drought and famine-stricken land. Elijah girded his loins, and with miraculous strength he ran from Mount Carmel to Jezreel in front of the king's chariot.

But now wicked Jezebel had vowed to kill the Prophet. He fled for his life to Beersheba. He journeyed into the wilderness alone, collapsed under a broom tree, and prayed "It is enough. Now, Lord, take my life..." He was overwhelmed, fatigued, spent, empty, demoralized. The heights of Mount Carmel seemed like a distant apex now. He found himself in the depths, in despair. He could not go on. He held no hope.

Perhaps you have known how the Prophet felt. The desert has seemed too dangerous. The journey has seemed too great to you. Perhaps you have known your own broom tree.

It was just then, as he fell into sleep, that an angel came and touched him. "Arise and eat", the angel said. A cake baked on coals and a jar of water miraculously appeared. He ate, and slept again. A second time the angel came, this time the Scripture identifies the angel – He is the Angel of the Lord, the physical manifestation of the pre-incarnate Christ.

He appeared to the Prophet in the desert and again He touched Him and said "Arise and eat." But this time He said more. "The journey is too great for you." God knew. God saw. God knew the Prophet felt himself to be without hope, without strength. And more than knowing, God intervened.

The Prophet arose, ate and drank, and was strengthened. The strength he received from that miraculous meal, from that divine food, carried him for forty days and forty nights as he journeyed from the desert to Horeb, the Mountain of God.

God knows. God sees. And more than knowing and seeing, God intervenes on behalf of His people. He knows the journey is too great for you. He knows you do not have the strength for the journey. For you must journey from sinfulness to holiness, from rejection by God to drawing nigh unto Him for salvation and life. And God knows that you are in the desert, in the wilderness of your sin, overwhelmed, fatigued, spent, empty, demoralized. He knows that of and by yourself you cannot go on, that of and by yourself you have no hope.

He intervenes for you, He saves you, by taking on your flesh. He intervenes for you by His own forty days and forty nights in the desert, tempted by the devil. He intervenes for you by overcoming the temptation you could not overcome, by living the sinless life you could not live, by fulfilling the Law that you could not keep.

He intervenes for you by giving Himself over to be falsely accused, to be harshly arrested and bound, to be tried in a sham trial, to be blasphemed and lied against, to be wrongly convicted, to be rejected by God and by men, and by dying the death you rightly should have died. He made the journey you could not make. He spent the three days in the heart of the earth. The True Prophet Himself collapsed on a tree in the wilderness of Golgotha, but while Elijah was spared, the Lord that intervened for Elijah died.

And the fruits of His precious suffering and death He brings to you in this desert, this wilderness of sinful and fallen men, this realm of the prince of this world. He comes to you here, precisely where and when you cannot help yourself, when you feel hopeless and helpless, and He brings His righteousness, His sinlessness, His holiness, His victory to you – and He makes them all yours.

In hopelessness He brings you hope. In despair He brings you certain victory. In fatigue He brings you the strength to go on. He intervened for you by defeating death, and rising to new life, by fulfilling the Sign of Jonah. By His Gifts He makes your 40 day Lenten journey not desert time, but like Moses on the Mount, time in the presence of God.

Not the broom tree, but the tree of the cross He made the altar of the true, Once For All Sacrifice, the Sacrifice of Himself for the sins of the world. In the wilderness the pre-Incarnate Christ brought miraculous food and drink to Elijah to strengthen him. But here, in the place made holy by His Presence, for the One greater than Jonah is here, the One greater than Solomon is here.

He is the True Prophet, Priest and King, the Prophet greater than Elijah. And He who fed Elijah in the wilderness bids you “arise and eat”, as He brings you Miraculous Food, Heavenly Food to strengthen you for the journey through this desert, Divine Sustenance, the Holy Eucharist, to make your faith strong and to give you hope.

He feeds you on this liturgical mountain, that you go from His altar strengthened and encouraged, and that you journey in faith all the way- not to Sinai, but to the presence of the Coming Lord as you stand before Him on the last day.

In the Name of the Father, and of the ✠ Son, and of the Holy Ghost.