



In the Gospel readings for the last two weekends, we encountered the Jews murmuring and quarreling among themselves: “How can this man [Jesus] claim that he is the living bread come down from heaven?” and, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?” This week we find those closer to Jesus, his disciples, wrestling with the same concepts. They respond, “This saying is

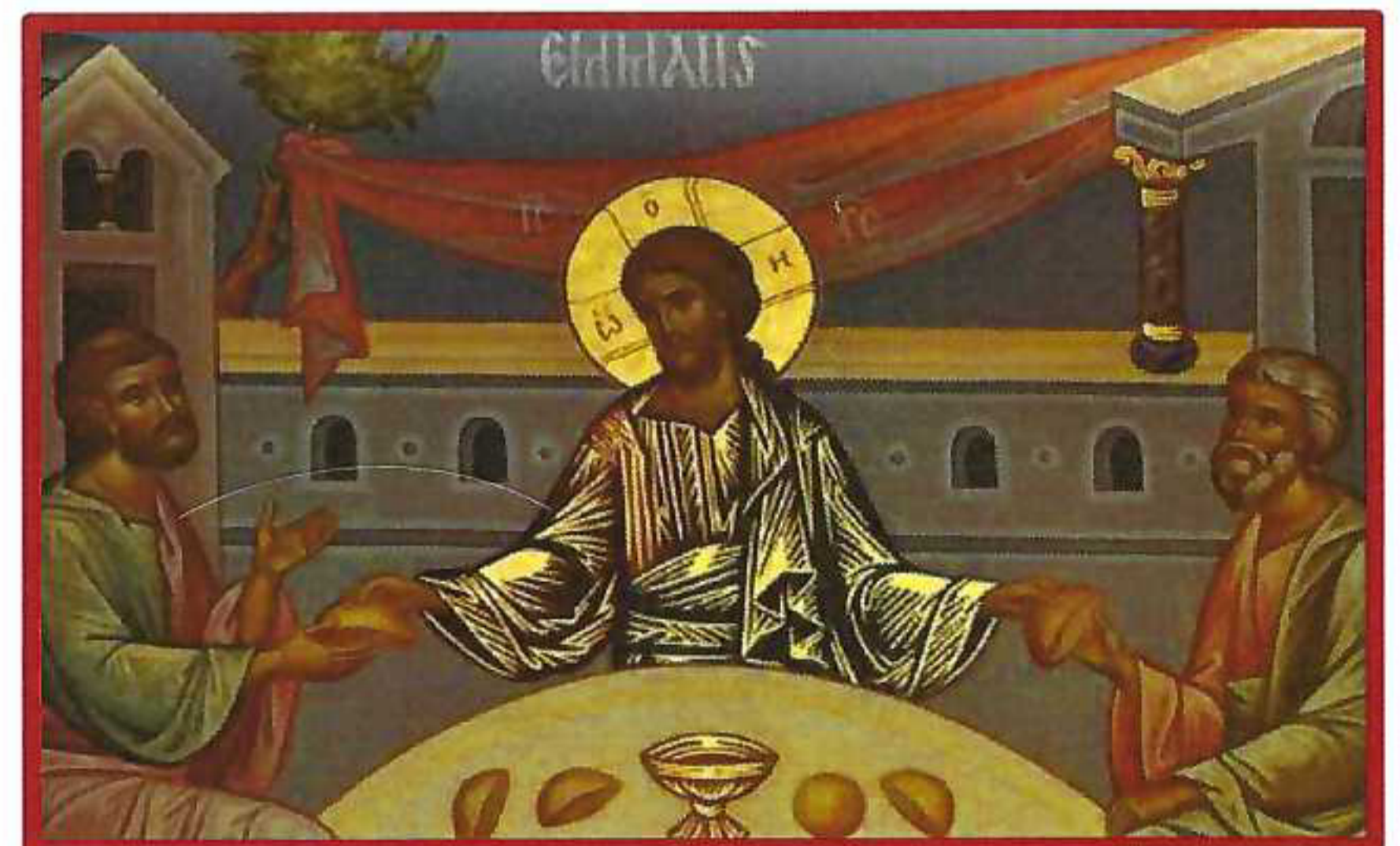
hard, who can accept [obey] it?” In fact, the Scriptures record, “As a result of this, many of his disciples returned to their former way of life and no longer accompanied him.” Jesus then addressed those closest to him, the twelve, “Do you also want to leave?” Peter responds on behalf of the twelve, “Master, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and are convinced that you are the Holy One of God.”

The question arises, how could Peter possibly believe these seemingly impossible declarations? How does one move from murmuring (disbelief) to saving faith? Pope Benedict XVI offers us an insightful explanation:

In Luke ... Peter’s confession is connected with a prayer event. Luke begins his account of the story with a deliberate paradox: “As he was praying alone, the disciples were with him” (Lk 9:18). The disciples are drawn into his solitude, his communion with the Father that is reserved to him alone. They are privileged to see him as the one who ... speaks face-to-face with the Father, person to person. They are privileged to see him in his utterly unique filial being—at the point from which all his words, his deeds, and his powers issue. They are privileged to see what the “people” do not see, and this seeing gives rise to a recognition that goes beyond the “opinion” of the people. This seeing is the wellspring of their faith, their confession; it provides the foundation for the Church. (Pope Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth*, p. 291).

The Pope goes on to explain that the disciples gained a deeper knowledge of who Jesus was by their many days of being his disciples: by participation in “his way”—i.e. his attitudes, his actions, his way of seeing and being in the world. In other words, by tasting and seeing the way Jesus lived, by being with Him and praying with Him—being “drawn into his solitude, his communion with the Father”—they were prepared to receive saving faith as a gift from God the Father.

Today, Jesus invites each of us to learn more deeply “His way”—to observe and acquire His way of seeing and acting, to follow Him, and so to become his disciples. Our confession of faith, like Peter’s, is not born of “flesh and blood;” it is ultimately connected with a prayer event. Only after spending time in prayerful solitude with Jesus can we respond with supernatural certainty: “Master, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and are convinced that you are the Holy One of God.” Only in this way can we move from murmuring to believing.



Your Servant in Christ,
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