# “God Desires our Friendship”

It is interesting that the Jews murmured when Jesus said **“I am the bread that came down from heaven,”** just as the children of Israel did in the wilderness in our first reading. The Jews murmured because to them, they knew where Jesus came from, they knew His parents and some of them grew up and probably played games with Him as a child. Their murmuring could be, we know everything about You, and how could You now say You came down from heaven? So You must be a liar.

In the United States, cultural heroes include those who come from humble origins and rise to achieve great status. Abraham Lincoln is a familiar example. Such achievement is possible, only because of our cultural belief in the equality of all persons. However, when real experience contradicts this belief, we fall back on the idea of, ***there is equal opportunity for everyone***, or at least everyone can rise to a greater position than the one they were born into.

However, in ancient Mediterranean, the possibility of someone getting out of the status they were born into was frowned upon. To them, whatever status you were born into, was the status you must maintain. Should you be born into a poor family, you were supposed to remain poor. If your father is a carpenter then you should be a carpenter. In fact, for them, it was regarded as an honor for a person to remain in the status they were born into.

No wonder it was hard for the Jews to accept Jesus’ teachings about the bread of life even though they were impressed by His other teachings and marveled at the miracles He performed. To them, He said many things they could not stomach or accept. To them, His desire that they have to eat His flesh was scandalous.

Often in our lives, we come across similar situation in our circle of friends, at school, or with our neighbors or it could be at the office. If we say something that is unpopular, those who support us at one breath would crucify us on another breath. It is never easy to go against the gain. It is never easy to say the unpopular thing.

But Jesus showed us how to respond in such situations. He showed us we should stick to what is right and not deviate from God’s ways. God told us, His ways are not the world’s ways and He used an analogy that as far as the heaven is far from the earth, so are His ways far from ours.

Jesus’ reply to their murmuring was to say to them, knowledge of His heavenly origin is only possible to those who are ‘drawn to Him’ in faith by His Father and He went further by saying, to be drawn is hearing and learning from God. Jesus quoted Isaiah 54:13, **“They shall all be taught by God,”** to let them know that prophesy was being fulfilled in their hearing. However, they could not believe Him because they thought they knew where He came from.

The love of God is poured out to us in the life and mission of Jesus. God desires our friendship. God wants your friendship and my friendship. In fact the whole of salvation history is about God coming in search of you and me so that you and I can leave in friendship with God and with one another. God has come in search of humanity in the person of His Son Jesus Christ who reconciles us to God our creator.

As we ponder on the reality of this faith, we are invited to respond to this Divine invitation of friendship in the way we leave our lives each day and not murmur like the Jews did. We should not murmur by despairing when things are not going our way. Instead, we should know that God is in control and He is teaching us all the time. All He needs is our obedience which comes from having faith in Him. And if we have faith in Him, He will deliver us from all our fears.

As we come to receive Him in the Eucharist, let us ask Him to increase our faith by accepting the teachings of His Church even if they go against our human understanding.