

Scripture Study

Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time – Cycle A



Opening prayer

Isaiah 55:1-3

(Ps 145:8-9, 15-18)

Romans 8:35, 37-39

Matthew 14:13-21

Overview of the Gospel:

- After relating the parables we've been hearing in the Sunday Gospels over the last few weeks, Jesus is rejected at Nazareth (Matthew 13:53-58), and his cousin and precursor, John the Baptist, is martyred by Herod (Matthew 14:1-12). Upon hearing this, he withdraws with his disciples to an unidentified "lonely place" (RSV).
- The miracle of the multiplication of the loaves and fish appears in all four Gospels. From the abundance of grass present, we can imagine this occurring in mid-spring. John places it at Passover, one year before the Passion (John 6:4).
- This miracle calls to mind God's giving of the miraculous manna and the quail in the wilderness to the Israelites as they wandered for 40 years (Exodus 16). It also recalls a similar miracle performed by the prophet Elisha (2 Kings 4:42-44). This miracle actually surpasses the Old Testament types, while looking ahead to a bread that is even more wonderful still.

Questions:

- Regarding the 1st Reading, how do we hear God's invitation to "come to the waters"? For what do we hunger and thirst?
- In the 2nd Reading, go through the list of things that St. Paul says cannot separate us from the love of Christ. How is this encouraging? Why does this list not include things like our own sin and unfaithfulness?
- In the Gospel Reading, why does Jesus withdraw from the crowd? How does he react to the interruption?
- Describe how the disciples might have felt in verse 15. In verses 16-17? In verses 18-21?
- What new power do the disciples discover in Jesus? What is the lesson here?
- How does the feeding of the five thousand in Matthew's Gospel reflect eucharistic language (see Luke 22:19 and 1 Corinthians 11:23-24)? How is it similar to the Old Testament event related in 2 Kings 4:42-44? How is it different?
- How does their function of distributing the loaves and fishes point to the priesthood of the disciples? What does the bestowal of miraculous bread foreshadow?
- What insight about Jesus will you remember from this story?
- How have you seen God stretch your resources beyond what you could imagine?

Catechism of the Catholic Church: §§ 1335, 1329, 549

Closing prayer

He is generous even to exhaustion; and what is most wonderful is that He gives Himself thus entirely; not once only, but every day, if we wish it. Every fresh Communion is a new gift which Jesus Christ makes of Himself. -St. Ignatius Loyola

Remember to read and meditate on the daily Mass readings found in the bulletin!

"They took up twelve baskets full of the broken pieces left over"

Scripture: *Matthew 14:13-21*

Now when Jesus heard this, he withdrew from there in a boat to a lonely place apart. But when the crowds heard it, they followed him on foot from the towns. As he went ashore he saw a great throng; and he had compassion on them, and healed their sick. When it was evening, the disciples came to him and said, "This is a lonely place, and the day is now over; send the crowds away to go into the villages and buy food for themselves." Jesus said, "They need not go away; you give them something to eat." They said to him, "We have only five loaves here and two fish." And he said, "Bring them here to me." Then he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass; and taking the five loaves and the two fish he looked up to heaven, and blessed, and broke and gave the loaves to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. And they all ate and were satisfied. And they took up twelve baskets full of the broken pieces left over. And those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children.

Meditation: How do you treat those who make unexpected demands on you? When Jesus and the disciples sought a lonely place to regroup and rest, they found instead a crowd of more than five thousand people waiting for them! Did they



resent this intrusion on their hard-earned need for privacy and refreshment? Jesus certainly didn't but welcomed them with open-arms. Jesus put human need ahead of everything else. His compassion showed the depths of God's love and concern for all who are truly needy. Jesus gave the people the word of God and he healed them physically as well as spiritually. We can never intrude upon God nor exhaust his generosity and kindness. He is ever ready to give to those who earnestly seek him out. Do you thirst for his saving word and for his healing power?

Why did Jesus command his disciples to do what seemed impossible – to feed such a large and hungry crowd when there were no adequate provisions in sight? Jesus, no doubt wanted to test their faith and to teach them to rely upon God for their provision. The signs which Jesus did, including the miraculous feeding of the five thousand signified that God the Father had indeed sent his only begotten Son as the

anointed Prophet and King for his people. Jesus' feeding of the five thousand is the only miracle recorded in all four gospels. What is the significance of this miracle? The miraculous feeding of such a great multitude pointed to God's provision of manna in the wilderness for the people of Israel under Moses' leadership. This food foreshadowed the true heavenly bread which Jesus would offer his followers. Jesus makes a claim only God can make: He is the *true bread of heaven* that can satisfy the deepest hunger we experience. The feeding of the five thousand shows the remarkable generosity of God and his great kindness towards us. When God gives, he gives abundantly. He gives more than we need for ourselves that we may have something to share with others, especially those who lack what they need. God takes the little we have and multiplies it for the good of others. Do you trust in God's provision for you and do you share freely with others, especially those who lack?

"Lord Jesus Christ, you satisfy the deepest longings of our hearts and you feed us with the finest of wheat (Psalm 81:16). Fill me with gratitude for your blessings and give me a generous heart that I may freely share with others what you have given to me."