

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew

*They all ate and were satisfied.*

When Jesus received the news of John the Baptist's death he withdrew by boat to a lonely place where they could be by themselves. But the people heard of this and, leaving the towns, went after him on foot. So as he stepped ashore he saw a large crowd; and he took pity on them and healed their sick.

When evening came, the disciples went to him and said, 'This is a lonely place, and the time has slipped by; so send the people away, and they can go to the villages to buy themselves some food.' Jesus replied, 'There is no need for them to go: give them something to eat yourselves.' But they answered, 'All we have with us is five loaves and two fish.' 'Bring them here to me,' he said. He gave orders that the people were to sit down on the grass; then he took the five loaves and the two fish, raised his eyes to heaven and said the blessing. And breaking the loaves he handed them to his disciples who gave them to the crowds. They all ate as much as they wanted, and they collected the scraps remaining, twelve baskets full. Those who ate numbered about five thousand men, to say nothing of women and children.

#### ■ The Gospel of the Lord.

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# Reflections on the Gospel



# THE SAVING WORD

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## 'YOU GIVE THEM SOMETHING TO EAT'

The disciples function rather like a modern celebrity's 'minders'. When Jesus has finished healing the sick, they urge him to send the crowd away to buy food for themselves before nightfall.

Jesus reacts to the word 'buy'. He will not send people away to buy anything – nor should the disciples. When they point out with astonishment that they barely have enough for themselves (five loaves and two fish), Jesus, acting the part of divine Wisdom who speaks in the First Reading (Isa 55:1-3), *freely* provides more than enough food for the whole multitude.

His gestures in doing so – taking the loaves, blessing, breaking and giving them – clearly foreshadows the institution of the Eucharist at the Last Supper (Matt 26:26). To participate in the Eucharist is to experience the same divine hospitality so lavishly provided by Jesus.

The miraculous feeding and the Eucharist which it foreshadows bring out that the essence of what God wants to do for us is simply be a most generous Host at the banquet of eternal life. At the same time, since it depicts people being fed with real food, it bears directly, in a sacramental sense, upon the problem of world hunger. The Lord who took pity on the large crowd, looks with similar eyes upon our world and instructs us, as he instructed his disciples, 'Give them something to eat yourselves'. In the words of the Venerable Pedro Arrupe (former Jesuit General): 'The Eucharist will never be complete so long as people still go hungry in our world'.

Brendan Byrne, SJ

## FIRST READING

Isa 55:1-3

A reading from the prophet Isaiah

*Hasten and eat.*

Thus says the Lord:

Oh, come to the water all you who are thirsty;  
though you have no money, come!  
Buy corn without money, and eat,  
and, at no cost, wine and milk.

Why spend money on what is not bread,  
your wages on what fails to satisfy?

Listen, listen to me and you will have good  
things to eat  
and rich food to enjoy.

Pay attention, come to me;  
listen, and your soul will live.

With you I will make an everlasting covenant  
out of the favours promised to David.

#### ■ The word of the Lord.

## RESP PSALM

Ps 144:8-9, 15-18. R. v. 16

**R.** The hand of the Lord feeds us,  
he answers all our needs.

1. The Lord is kind and full of compassion, /  
slow to anger, abounding in love. / How good  
is the Lord to all, / compassionate to all his  
creatures. **R.**

2. The eyes of all creatures look to you / and  
you give them their food in due time. / You  
open wide your hand, / grant the desires of all  
who live. **R.**

3. The Lord is just in all his ways / and loving  
in all his deeds. / He is close to all who call  
him, / call on him from their hearts. **R.**



## SECOND READING

Rom 8:35, 37-39

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Romans

*No creature can separate us from the love of God,  
which is in Christ.*

Nothing can come between us and the love of Christ, even if we are troubled or worried, or being persecuted, or lacking food or clothes, or being threatened or even attacked. These are the trials through which we triumph, by the power of him who loved us.

For I am certain of this: neither death nor life, no angel, no prince, nothing that exists, nothing still to come, not any power, or height or depth, nor any created thing, can ever come between us and the love of God made visible in Christ Jesus our Lord.

#### ■ The word of the Lord.

## GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Mt 4:4

Alleluia, alleluia! / No one lives on bread alone, / but on every word that comes from the mouth of God. / Alleluia!