

First reading Isaiah 55:1-3

‘Come and eat.’

Thus says the Lord:

‘Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters;
and he who has no money, come, buy and eat!

Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.

Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which does not satisfy?

Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good,
and delight yourselves in rich food.

Incline your ear, and come to me; hear, that your soul may live; and I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David.’

Responsorial Psalm 145(144): 8-9, 15-18. R cf.16

You open your hand and fulfil us, O Lord.The Lord is kind and full of compassion,
slow to anger, abounding in mercy.

How good is the Lord to all,

compassionate to all his creatures.

You open your hand and fulfil us, O Lord.

The eyes of all look to you,

and you give them their food in due season.

You open your hand and satisfy
the desire of every living thing.**You open your hand and fulfil us, O Lord.**The Lord is just in all his ways,
and holy in all his deeds.The Lord is close to all who call him,
who call on him in truth.**You open your hand and fulfil us, O Lord.**

Second reading Romans 8:35, 37-39

‘Nothing in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ.’

Brothers and Sisters: Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Gospel Acclamation Matthew 4:4b

Alleluia, alleluia.One does not live by bread alone,
but by every word that comes forth from the mouth of God.**Alleluia.**

Gospel Matthew 14: 13-21

‘They all ate and were satisfied.’

At that time: When Jesus heard of the death of John the Baptist, he withdrew in a boat to a desolate place by himself. But when the crowds heard it, they followed him on foot from the towns. When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them and healed their sick. Now when it was evening, the disciples came to him and said, ‘This is a desolate place, and the day is now over; send the crowds away to go into the villages and buy food for themselves.’ But 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 said a blessing. Then he broke the loaves and gave them 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.

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Feast days this week**Tuesday 4th August: St John Mary Vianney****Wednesday 5th August: Dedication of the Basilica of St Mary Major****Thursday 6th August: The Transfiguration of the Lord****Friday 7th August: St Sixtus and his Companions****Saturday 8th August: St Dominic****The Cycle of Prayer****A Deeper Understanding between Christians and Jews****Prayer***Let us pray also for the Jewish people,
to who the Lord our God spoke first,
that he may grant them to advance in love of his name
and in faithfulness to his covenant.**Almighty ever-living God,
who bestowed your promises on Abraham and his descendants,
graciously hear the prayers of your Church,
that the people you first made your own
may attain the fullness of redemption.*

Hungers of body and spirit

The crowds in today's gospel had nothing to eat, but our Lord knew they had another hunger apart from that of the stomach. They followed Jesus, listening to every word he spoke, and in none of the stories does it say that they were bothered about food for the body. In today's episode, it is the apostles who expressed this concern, on behalf of the people. In another place it says that Jesus "looked at the crowd, and felt sorry for them, because they had been with him for several days, and had nothing to eat." Yet the twin hungers in today's world are for meaning as well as for food.

Jesus sets the apostles a seemingly impossible challenge. When they point out the lack of food he tells them to feed the people themselves. This, of course, cannot be done, and they tell him so. He then taught them, and us, a basic lesson: "Whatever you have is enough. Just let me have it, and I will do the rest." At Cana, all they had was water, and it was all he needed; He would do the rest. In another version of this story, where one of the apostles says "We only have a few loaves and some fish, but what is that among so many?" The temptation was to put the loaves and fish back in the bag.

There is power in the actions of Jesus as he says a prayer and begins distributing the bread. Before he called Lazarus forth from the tomb, he raised his eyes to heaven, and said "I thank you, Father, that you have heard me." It was his constant contact with the Father that inspired his actions. At his baptism in the Jordan he had heard the Father's voice saying "This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased." He lived constantly with the Father's approval, even when everyone else rejected him. What a lesson this is for all of us! In commissioning his apostles, later on, he would tell them to feed the hungry. Because he came "to do and to teach," that is why he fed the hungry before sending his disciples to do the same.

It is a scandal that so large a part of today's world is made up of hungry people. Most of us have more than we need of money, clothes, food, etc. We may not have as much as we want, but we have more than we need. There is a struggle here, and there is a tension from which we cannot escape. "Whatever you do for the least of these, I will take as being done for me." The decisions to walk in the Christian Way removes many of my options and choices. Christianity is much more than just saying prayers. It is also a call to action. It is a call to do as Jesus would do. I cannot read today's gospel and remain indifferent or detached.

"It is in giving that we receive." When we give, we discover that we are not at a loss. It is an extraordinary paradox, but it is literally me. I will never know this until I try it. How do you consider yourself in the whole area of responsibility for the welfare of others? We are all familiar with the Saint Vincent de Paul Society, Concern, Goal, etc., and we may admire what they do. But we must go beyond admiration and become willing to imitate, and follow their example. Christianity is about witnessing, and in the witnessing is the invitation to "go and do likewise." The opposite to love is not hatred, but indifference. If God is love, and I am indifferent, then I must seriously examine where God is in my life. This is a fundamental and basic question that must be asked, and it must be answered. associationofcatholicpriests.ie