



Preparing for the Mass of Sunday 25th July 2021 - The Seventeenth Sunday of Ordinary Time

1 Relax & Remember

Set aside 10 -15 minutes and create a suitable environment by removing any distractions. Make sure that you are comfortable. Perhaps light a candle. Make the sign of the cross † and remain still for a minute of settling silence. **Call to mind the love that God has for you. Remember that through this scripture our Lord is truly present.** Then read the Gospel, preferably aloud and slowly, and pay attention to any words that stand out. If any do, meditate on them for a few minutes and be invited into a dialogue with God.



2 Read

Taken from the Gospel for 25th July 2021 (John 6:1-15): The Feeding of the Five Thousand

Jesus went off to the other side of the Sea of Galilee - or of Tiberias - and a large crowd followed him, impressed by the signs he gave by curing the sick. Jesus climbed the hillside, and sat down there with his disciples. It was shortly before the Jewish feast of Passover. Looking up, Jesus saw the crowds approaching and said to Philip, "Where can we buy some bread for these people to eat?" He only said this to test Philip; he himself knew exactly what he was going to do. Philip answered, "Two hundred denarii would only buy enough to give them a small piece each." One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said, "There is a small boy here with five barley loaves and two fish; but what is that between so many?" Jesus said to them, "Make the people sit down." There was plenty of grass there, and as many as five thousand men sat down. Then Jesus took the loaves, gave thanks, and gave them out to all who were sitting ready; he then did the same with the fish, giving out as much as was wanted. When they had eaten enough he said to the disciples, "Pick up the pieces left over, so that nothing gets wasted." So they picked them up, and filled twelve hampers with scraps left over from the meal of five barley loaves. The people, seeing this sign that he had given, said, "This really is the prophet who is to come into the world." Jesus, who could see they were about to come and take him by force and make him king, escaped back to the hills by himself.



3 Reflect

After spending a few minutes considering this Gospel, continue by reading Fr Henry Wansbrough's reflection.

In this Sunday's Gospel, John's version of the miraculous feeding reminds us of the Last Supper, when Jesus 'said the blessing' over the bread. Since John's gospel has no account of the institution of the Eucharist at the Last Supper, this feeding account is particularly significant. The feeding is also described as one of the 'signs' which Jesus works. The first part of the Gospel of John is often called 'the Book of Signs' because Jesus works a number of signs which show who he truly is. First there is the sign at the marriage-feast of Cana, where the sign of turning the water into wine is a sign of the messianic banquet. Other signs are the raising of the royal official's son, a sign of Jesus' gift of life, and the cure of the blind man in the temple, a sign of Jesus' gift of light and revelation. Several of the signs are followed by an extended discourse, explaining the meaning of the sign, as this feeding sign is followed by the discourse on the Bread of Life, explaining the significance of Jesus' gift of himself as the Bread of Life, the Wisdom of God received in the Eucharist.

Why is this miracle called a sign? What is it a sign of?

Dom Henry Wansbrough OSB

4 Respond & Request

Now slowly and prayerfully read the Gospel once again but this time in silence. Consider how this Gospel could apply to your life in general. Then thank God for any insight you may have received. Conclude by asking God to bless you with one of the following spiritual gifts to help you act on any resolution you have made: love, understanding, wisdom, faithfulness, peace, self control, patience, or joy. Please remember to pray for the Church and particularly our school families. **Then conclude by requesting the prayers of Our Lady & St Joseph.**



WEDNESDAY WORD PLUS †

Fr Henry's reflections on the first and second readings of Sunday 25th July 2021



First Reading: *Elisha Feeds the Crowds*

2 Kings 4:42-44

A man came from Baal-shalishah, bringing Elisha, the man of God, bread from the first-fruits, twenty barley loaves and fresh grain in the ear. "Give it to the people to eat," Elisha said. But his servant replied, "How can I serve this to a hundred men?" "Give it to the people to eat", he insisted, "for the Lord says this, 'They will eat and have some left over.'" He served them; they ate and had some over, as the Lord had said.

The prophet Elisha was renowned for the wonders he worked; others are related before and after this incident. Here he is repeating Moses' miracle of providing bread or manna for his followers. For Christians, however, the greater interest is that the miraculous feeding by Jesus is recounted in the gospels in terms which deliberately recall this incident: the chance-comer who provides barley loaves and more, the prophet's command, the disciple's incredulous question, the repeated command, the feeding and the food left over. The same six steps may be seen in the gospel. So Jesus is repeating the Moses miracle after the pattern of Elisha, only a thousand times as generously: instead of twenty 'loaves' (small pitta-breads) among a hundred men, Jesus shares out five among five thousand. What is the point of this modelling of the story? For John Jesus is a second Moses, standing in the same tradition but greater than Moses, making God known just as Moses had done, bringing to completion all that Moses had begun. "The Law was given through Moses, grace and truth have come through Jesus Christ" (John 1:17).

What does this miracle teach us about the Lord and his generosity?

Second Reading: *The Unity of the Church*

Ephesians 4:1-6

I, the prisoner in the Lord, implore you to lead a life worthy of your vocation. Bear with one another charitably, in complete selflessness, gentleness and patience. Do all you can to preserve the unity of the Spirit by the peace that binds you together. There is one Body, one Spirit, just as you were all called into one and the same hope when you were called. There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God who is Father of all, through all and within all.

“One Lord, one faith,
one baptism, one God
and Father of all.”

The continuing disunity among Christians makes this passage difficult to read with a clear conscience. It is perhaps the strongest plea for unity in the New Testament, with the possible exception of Jesus' prayer at the Last Supper, that "they may be one" (John 17:21). Is there really a "peace that binds you together"? One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all – all this is undeniable. One faith? Perhaps not in the sense of a set or list of beliefs, but all Christians profess the same awareness of inability to save ourselves; we all rely on and put our trust in God's promises, fulfilled in Jesus Christ. In itself that awareness should be enough to draw us together. What can still justify our disunity? At least we should rejoice that immense strides have been made in a lifetime since the annual Week of Prayer for Christian Unity was established; there is an earnest desire to understand one another and our still separate traditions. The work of the one Spirit is clear in that the generation that began this search can hardly have hoped for such enormous steps to have been taken. We delight in the recognition that the traditions in different Church communities express the same fundamental values and point us together to Christ our Lord.

What else can we do to foster the unity that Christ longs for?

The Wednesday Word: *Connecting Home, School & Parish through the Word of God*
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