

A reading from the book of the prophet Isaiah.

Pause - and look up at the assembly

Thus says the Lord:
“Everyone who thirsts,
come to the waters;
and you that have 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 carefully to me, and eat what is good,
and delight yourselves in rich food.
Incline your ear, and come to me;
listen, so that you may live.
I will make with you an everlasting covenant,
my steadfast, sure love for David.”



Pause for **THREE** seconds
then look up at the people
and say SLOWLY:

The WORD of the LORD.

Thanks be to God.

SECOND READING – A 18

A reading from the letter of Saint Paul to the Romans.

Pause - and look up at the assembly

Brothers and sisters:

Who will separate us from the love of Christ?

Will hardship, or distress, or persecution,
or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors
through him who loved us.

For I am convinced 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.



Pause for **THREE** seconds
then look up at the people
and say SLOWLY:

The WORD of the LORD.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL READING – A 18

The Lord be with you.

And with your spirit.

A reading from the holy gospel according to Matthew.

Glory to you, O Lord

When Jesus heard that Herod had beheaded John the Baptist,
he withdrew in a boat to a deserted place by himself.

But when the crowds heard it,
they followed him on foot from the towns.

When he went ashore, Jesus saw a great crowd;
and he had compassion for them and cured their sick.

Then it was evening, the disciples came to him and said,
“This is a deserted place, and the hour is now late;
send the crowds away so that they may go into the villages
and buy food for themselves.”

Jesus said to them,
“They need not go away;
you give them something to eat.”

They replied,
“We have nothing here but five loaves and two fish.”
And he said, “Bring them here to me.”

Then he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass.

Taking the five loaves and the two fish,
he looked up to heaven,
and blessed and broke the loaves,
and gave them to the disciples,
and the disciples gave them to the crowds.

And all ate and were filled;
and they took up what was left over of the broken pieces,
twelve baskets full.

And those who ate were about five thousand men,
besides women and children.



The GOSPEL of the LORD.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

SCRIPTURES IN DEPTH

Reading I: Isaiah 55:1-3

Having announced the return of God's people to their homeland as the culminating event of Israel's salvation history, Second Isaiah concludes his prophecies with an invitation to the eschatological banquet.

This banquet imagery continues to develop along a trajectory both in the Wisdom literature and in Jewish apocalyptic. It is taken up in the New Testament and underlies the accounts of the feedings, one of which forms the gospel of this day.

Responsorial Psalm 145:8-9, 15-16, 17-18

The second stanza, linking as it does with both the Old Testament reading and the gospel, explains the psalm's presence here. Note particularly the verb "satisfy" both in verse 16 and in the gospel (Mt 14:20).

The Greek word is not the same, however, in these passages. The psalm has "filled"; the gospel has a rather coarse word meaning "stuffed full." But the notion of repletion, however expressed, figures frequently in descriptions of the eschatological banquet.

Reading II: Romans 8:35, 37-39

In this concluding selection from Romans 8, Paul rises to great heights of eloquence. It is almost a hymn of triumph. In both paragraphs, as arranged in the Lectionary, the word "separate" occurs. The first paragraph is a question: "Who [not "What"] will separate us ... ?"

Paul regards the seven forms of suffering he is about to enumerate as quasi-personal powers, perhaps because they are earthly manifestations of the cosmic-demonic powers enumerated in the second paragraph, which is in the form of a statement, not a question.

Here Paul names ten cosmic powers that cannot separate us from "the love of God in Christ Jesus." This last phrase corresponds to "the love of Christ" in the first paragraph. The two are essentially the same thing, the same love.

For Paul, this love is not an abstract quality but an event that happened, namely, the Cross. The Cross was the obedience of the Son (see Phil 2:8) and at the same time the redemptive act of the Father (2 Cor 5:19).

In this passage, then, Paul is interpreting the death of Jesus as a victory over the demonic powers who can do no ultimate damage to believers. Paul does not say that believers are already immune to the onslaughts of these powers, but he is sure that amid all demonic onslaughts the believers are "superconquerors."

Gospel: Matthew 14:13-21

The feeding of the multitude occurs more frequently than any other episode in the four Gospels—six times in all. This testifies to its importance for the early community, an importance due to its connection with the Eucharist.

Whereas we tend to see the origin of the Eucharist exclusively in the Last Supper, the early church laid at least as much stress on Jesus' eating with his disciples in Galilee, to say nothing of the post resurrection meals.

The telling of the story has been shaped by the eucharistic customs of the community: "taking the ... loaves," "blessed," "broke," "gave," I "ate." The words "he looked up to heaven" may also be eucharistic, though not attested elsewhere in New Testament eucharistic texts.

Note, however, the complete absence of any reference to Passover, covenant, or sacrificial motifs. There is no mention of the "words of institution." There is no cup; instead of wine, fish figure twice in the early part of the narrative, though they disappear later on. Clearly the account has in mind the early Christian rite of the breaking of the bread, celebrated daily (Acts 2:46), rather than the covenant-sacrifice meal, which was probably, in the earliest days, a single, annual Christian Passover celebration.

This daily breaking of the bread had eschatological associations: it was an anticipation of the messianic banquet. The church's Eucharist today combines, or should combine, both the sacrificial and the eschatological associations. In the recent past, emphasis has been placed more on the sacrificial than on the eschatological aspect, but the imbalance is now being redressed.

All this applies to the meaning of Jesus' feeding the multitude in the oral tradition. What of the evangelist's redaction? As we compare Matthew's account with its parallel in Mk 6:30-44, not only do we find Matthew's account abbreviated, but we also see that the role of the disciples in the episode differs considerably, and this must in fact be Matthew's chief redactional concern.

In the opening dialogue between Jesus and the disciples (Mt 14:15-18), Mark portrays the disciples as lacking in understanding, whereas in Matthew they understand well enough but are deficient in faith (H. J. Held).

In the actual feeding (the final paragraph of our reading), the disciples' role is more prominent, and what happens to the multitude is less prominent. The disciples bring the bread to Jesus at his command (Mt 14:18). Matthew explicitly states that the disciples "gave" the bread to the crowd. The evangelist seems concerned to underline the functions of the ministry as they are developing in his church.

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