



AMDG
17TH SUNDAY
IN ORDINARY TIME
YEAR B
25TH JULY 2021



**‘His hands were as earth beneath the bread
and his voice was as thunder above it’
St Ephrem the Syrian (d. 373)**

OPENING PRAYER

O God, protector of those who hope in you,
without whom nothing has firm foundation, nothing is holy,
bestow in abundance your mercy upon us
and grant that, with you as our ruler and guide,
we may use the good things that pass
in such a way as to hold fast even now
to those that ever endure.

This Sunday’s readings remind us that God provides for us physically as well as spiritually.

In the *First Reading*, Elisha assures his servant that one hundred people will be fed with just twenty barley loaves because the Lord has promised it, while the *Psalmist* praises the Lord who, by feeding us from his own hand, ‘answers all our needs’.

St Paul, writing to the Church at Ephesus (*Second Reading*), assures the Christian community that, despite any evidence to the contrary, God, who unifies the people, is in control.

The three readings are brought together in the *Gospel* account of the Feeding of the Five Thousand (which is a foreshadowing of the Eucharist and the only miracle of Jesus that is recounted in all four gospels). Not only does Jesus outdo Elisha’s miracle, he demonstrates that, by feeding the people from his own divine hands, God is unifying the people through meeting their need.

Let’s pray, this week, that we might know ourselves to be in the hands of the Lord, and that our lives may bear abundant fruit as a result.

PSALM 144 (145)

R./ You open wide your hand, O Lord, and grant our desires.

All your creatures shall thank you, O Lord,
and your friends shall repeat their blessing.
They shall speak of the glory of your reign
and declare your might, O God.

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.

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

As I ready myself for this time of prayer, I let myself become still.
I'm prepared to wait. I allow my breathing to slow, my posture to become comfortable, my mind to settle.

I read the psalm, a few times, slowly. I don't rush. Like the 'eyes of all creatures', I look to the Lord, expectant but patient.

Perhaps it would be beneficial to begin as the psalm begins, from a place of gratitude. As 'creature' – God's own creation – for what do I wish to thank the Lord?

Or, as friend of the Lord, can I name any blessing given to me?
What is coming to mind ...?

My initial focus might be on God. So I ask myself:
What does the 'glory' of the Lord look like, for me ...?
What about the 'might' of God ...? Or God's justice?
How have I experienced the loving deeds of the Lord in my life?
I ponder....

I might then be drawn to that word 'desire'.
What are the desires of my heart?
What is their place within the open hand of the Lord?
I stay with this for a while.

When ready to end my prayer, I might like simply to remain 'close' to the Lord as I call on him, talk to him, from my heart.

GOSPEL MARK 4: 35–41

Looking up, Jesus saw the crowds approaching and said to Philip, ‘Where can we buy some bread for these people to eat?’.... 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.’....

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.

In this familiar gospel Jesus gives thanks. So I, too, pause to give thanks for what the Lord has done, is doing, and will do for me.

I stay with my breathing for a few moments.

I read, pause and wait ...

I might like to pray imaginatively, entering the scene. Or I could allow certain words and phrases to speak to me. Is anything drawing me now ...? Perhaps those first two words? Jesus ‘looked up’: he noticed.

In what direction are my own eyes turned? Do I see the needs of others?

Is the smallness of the boy and the scarcity of his offering saying something to me about my own apparent limitedness? I ponder what the Lord might be able to do with the gift I offer, however small.

What about the crowd ‘sitting ready’? Am I ready to receive what the Lord wants to give me?

Jesus tells the disciples to ensure that nothing is wasted. What is this saying to me? I gaze at the twelve hampers, perhaps wondering at Jesus’s abundant provision. His offerings of love, care and grace are never scarce. From such gifts received, what can I share with others?

I rest in God’s love for me, ending my prayer slowly: *Our Father* ...

Here's a text if you've only got a minute ...

You grant our desires.

Psalm

I implore you to lead a life worthy of your vocation.

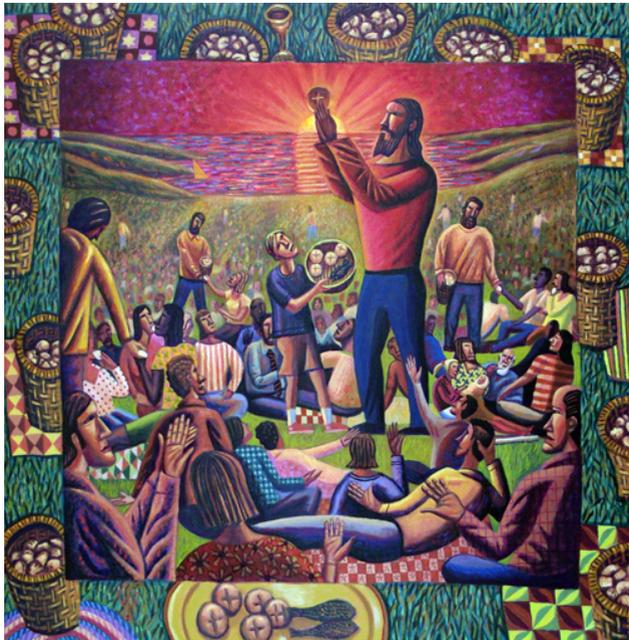
Second Reading

'If you can't feed a hundred people, then just feed one.'

St Teresa of Calcutta

This week's texts if you want to explore further:

2 Kings 4: 42-44; Psalm 144 (145); Ephesians 4: 1-6; John 6: 1-15



© James B. Jankneft, *Feeding the 5,000*
www.bcartfarm.com



ST BEUNO'S OUTREACH
IN THE DIOCESE OF WREXHAM

JESUIT
Ministries



Prepared by St Beuno's Outreach in the Diocese of Wrexham

LDS