



AMDG
EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY
IN ORDINARY TIME
YEAR A
2ND AUGUST 2020



**Nothing can come between us
and the love of Christ!**

OPENING PRAYER

Draw near to your servants, O Lord,
and answer their prayers with unceasing kindness,
that, for those who glory in you as their Creator and guide,
you may restore what you have created
and keep safe what you have restored.

In today's readings, we celebrate the great love of God, who not only gives us life, but desires to sustain and nourish us generously too.

In the *First Reading*, it is God himself who urgently pleads with his troubled, scattered people to listen. Through his prophet, he issues an invitation to a sacred meal. God offers 'water' for thirsty souls; 'corn, wine and milk' will also be made freely available for hungry hearts, without charge.

In the *Psalms*, one traditionally sung at meals, we praise the God who cares for all his creatures, supplying them with nourishment.

Paul writes in very stirring language, assuring us of the ever-present love and power of Jesus Christ. Divine love gives us grace and encouragement to live life to the fullest, even with and through the unavoidable trials and sufferings of life. This is the Christian gospel, the Good News! (*Second Reading*)

Even whilst stricken with grief, Jesus's response to the people is one of compassion (*Gospel*). He heals the sick and feeds the hungry, and there is still plenty of food left over to share. Jesus feeds the crowd in a way that foresees the food and drink he will offer us in the Eucharist.

Let's pray this week for courage to take the risk of really hearing what God is saying to us; what sacred nourishment he is freely offering us. May we put ourselves into his hands, asking that he will deepen his life in us and in our anxious, unjust world.

SECOND READING ROMANS 8: 35, 37–39

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.

Coming to my time of prayer, I allow myself to become aware of the sacred Spirit of Christ within me and around me.

I choose to hand over my burdens, my attachments, my wounded nature to the Lord, and ask the Holy Spirit to help me pray.

I read these profound words of St Paul slowly, reflectively, several times.

As I sit in receptive silence, I allow them to sink deep into my being.

Maybe I can rest with this inspired passage without expectation ...

rest with patience; with a heartfelt desire for the Beloved.

I try to absorb the words into my being, allowing myself to ponder and wonder.

Slowly, with loving attention, I read the piece again, pausing on the phrases that comfort or challenge me.

Perhaps I consider what my own greatest fears are.

I may like to add them to Paul's list to create my own petition ...

'May (...) not separate me from the love of Christ.'

This time of prayer is an opportunity to deepen my relationship with Christ and for him to deepen his life in me. I contemplate this.

I share whatever I am thinking and feeling with Christ: my burdens and worries, as well as my longings and gratitude ...

for myself ... for the people I know ... for this troubled and hungry world.

I ask for the grace and gift of inner freedom needed to experience the Lord's overwhelming love and desire for me ... and that he might show me how I can share his love with others, even more fully.

When I feel ready, I end my prayer slowly.

GOSPEL MATTHEW 14: 13–21

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.

Like Jesus before me, I try to withdraw into a quiet place of solitude to pray, perhaps out in nature or on a prayer walk. I ask the Holy Spirit to help still my inner being; to help me be present to the Lord's love and power.

When ready, I read the Gospel slowly several times.

I probably recognise the story ... but there may be aspects of it which haven't struck me before. I spend as much time as I can with these.

Jesus is grieving for the violent death of his dear cousin. Maybe this brings to mind some sadness and loss in my own life ... or maybe in the life of my sisters and brothers across the world. I share the depths of my emotions and yearnings with my compassionate Lord, who truly understands.

I take time to be in the scene in whatever way I can. Perhaps I sense the disciples' mood ... their concerns about limited supplies ... how they share their resources with Jesus. I remain with them as the story unfolds.

What do I notice about Jesus and his co-operative relationship with the disciples? How might Jesus be asking me to labour with him?

I share whatever arises with the Lord.

When I am ready, I beg the Lord to nourish my deepest yearnings for myself and for this interconnected world. *Glory be ...*

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

God, come to my help. Lord, do not be long in coming.

Entrance Antiphon

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

First Reading

These are trials through which we triumph,
by the power of him who loves us.

Second Reading

He took pity on the large crowd and healed their sick.

Gospel

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

Isaiah 55: 1–3; Psalm 144 (145); Romans 8: 35, 37–39; Matthew 14: 13–21



‘There is no need for them to go ...’



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