

**ECHOING GOD'S WORD
IN THE
CATHOLIC COMMUNITY
August 2, 2026
EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME**

SCRIPTURES:

Isaiah 55:1-3 God invites us to “come, buy and eat.”
Romans 8:35-39 No power can prevent God from loving us.
Matthew 14:13-21 Jesus feeds the crowd with what the disciples offer.

SCRIPTURE BACKGROUND:

Matthew:

A little bit of context will help us here: The Feeding of the 5000 occurs in that great narrative section (13:53 to 17:27) which prepares us for the Discourse on the Church in Chapter 18. Jesus is shaping the hearts and minds of his disciples for the role they will have to play in the leadership of that community to which he invites all people. The leaders of Israel have not received the message as they might have (13:54-58). Jesus himself will ultimately be rejected and killed as was John the Baptist (14: 1-12). Now, this miracle and sign is given so that those who accept Jesus will know what their proper role and responsibility will be in the assembly here on earth.

Matthew clearly wants us to remember that God does the feeding of the people in the Desert of Sinai after the Exodus. Now, it is Jesus who fulfills that role. Connection is also made with the Prophet Isaiah who sees messianic times as characterized by an abundance of food and drink (Isaiah 25:6). The Messiah has come with this feeding of the multitude here and now. Bread is the sign of salvation that Jesus brings (Matthew 15:26; Isaiah 55:2-3).

We even look forward to that great banquet in heaven at the end of time (Revelation 19:9) every time we are fed by Jesus, in that deserted place of Judea or in the ‘deserts’ of our everyday neediness.

The early Christian community must have seen the greatest significance in this miracle story from the life of Jesus and his disciples. This is the only miracle that is reported in each of the four Gospels. (Mark 6:32-44; Luke 9:10-17; John 6:1-13) Matthew understood this miracle story to be intimately linked with the action of the Last Supper where Jesus again *took, blessed, broke* and *gave* the bread to his apostles. The feeding of the 5000 anticipates that other mighty feeding where the bread and wine become the body and blood of Christ. Moreover, both of these miracles look forward to the eternal banquet with God the Father in heaven.

If the Church community wants to derive life from the eucharistic feeding and to share eventually in the heavenly feast, it must be willing to bring ‘barley loaves and fish,’ the food of the poor, to the Lord for his use and his blessing. Our poor, sinful lives are all we have to offer. We are expected to bring what we do have and to hold nothing back.

All the hungers of the human heart call out to Christ for satisfaction. Every yearning of our lives represents a need for God that only Jesus Christ can satisfy. In the Catholic tradition, we are aware that Jesus continues the ministry of feeding the multitude through the ministries of the Church. We are not only individually responsible for feeding the world, but we are corporately responsible also. As a Church community, we will make Christ visible in society today as we engage the Church in the works of mercy. Our Sunday Eucharist takes on credibility in society when it is intimately linked with the concrete daily needs of people. Hunger for education, hunger for love, hunger for peace, hunger for shelter and for clothing must all be satisfied with the same generosity with which we are willing to share the Eucharist.

Isaiah:

After a generation of Exile in Babylon, Israel is invited to feast again in the Land of Promise. The prophet alludes to the food given in the desert during Israel's first journey to that land and, again, the promise of abundant food given just before entering into it. *Water, wine, milk, bread* are the signs of God's favor and care for the people. All are given without having to earn them. God's gracious love pours out food and drink so the people can live with joy. No wonder food has become a sign of love in Jewish households (and Christian too)!

Romans:

Paul's theology of suffering is quite simple: Pain and deprivation cannot separate us from the love of God in Jesus Christ. Rather, these actually bring us closer to the realization of glory that is in the Risen Lord. His theology of superhuman powers is equally simply and direct: No created power, on earth or in the sky, can separate us from the love of Christ. All this does not mean that Paul takes suffering and opposition lightly. His own experience gives evidence that those are not to be taken lightly. But nothing beyond our control can ever separate us from the love of Christ. We have no need to consult any astrological chart to see if there is any threat to us today. The love of Christ keeps us safe.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Who provides the food in your family? Who prepares and offers it? Who blesses it and shares it? Do all the members of the household have something to contribute? How can each person, the very young and the very old, also be given an opportunity to give?
2. What are the many ways in which you have been able to respond to the Lord's command that "you give them something to eat?" Make a list of the different kinds of 'hunger' that you see all around you: physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual.
3. Your family, your prayer group, your parish has to be involved in 'giving bread to the hungry.' The work of evangelization rests on the shoulders of each one of the Christian faithful. Are there spiritual hungers in your town or city that your group is not yet feeding?

SUGGESTION FOR CHRISTIAN ACTION

Make a decision about bringing one of your gifts to the altar for sacrifice this next time you celebrate the Eucharist. It could be just an intention of prayer for someone in need of salvation. It could be a talent that you can offer in ministry. It could be a gift of time devoted to some worthy cause. It could be a donation of money.

PRAYER

"Teach us, good Lord, to serve you as you deserve; to give and not to count the cost; to fight and not to heed the wounds; to toil and not to seek for rest; to labor and not to ask for any reward save that of knowing we do your will."

St. Ignatius of Loyola

CATHOLIC PASTORAL PRACTICES

No wonder the Eucharist holds such prominence in the lives of the Catholic people. There is no other event that so resonates with the echoes of the disciples' own experience with the Lord Jesus: He gathers us; he takes what we have to offer; he bestows holiness upon it; he divides it up; he shares it with us.

The celebration of the Eucharist may at times have been reduced to some quite meaningless skeleton of itself: Just to go and *receive*. Stripping the whole event of its liturgical and real-life context reduces the Eucharist to mere magic or superstition. Some believe they have done their duty if they go up to *receive* and rush out immediately to other pursuits. What is this thing about merely receiving Communion rather than celebrating the life-giving experience of gathering with others at the invitation of the Lord, of taking from one another whatever part of our lives we are willing to offer, of blessing into holiness all that we are, of accepting back from the Lord all that he has transformed into his dying and rising again?

Our Sunday assemblies need to be marked by more of the characteristics of that great Feeding of the Crowd which took place in the deserted place where people found themselves without adequate provisions. The focus has to be on Jesus Christ who stands among us as the Great Provider, doing the work that his Father did for the people in the Desert of Sinai. We recognize the presence of Christ in the midst of the assembly of faith. He is among us with all the same powers to provide as he had that day when 5000 were fed.

He challenges us to participate by offering our own resources, by turning to one another in genuine concern with the sure belief that we can make a difference, that we must help one another. Jesus does not choose to do it all alone. He has invited us to do what he does: give of ourselves, our love, our concern, our time, and our care.

The parish assembly on Sundays provides us the kind of sign we need in order to become a giving community, a working community, where each member has something to offer, where everyone can receive without having to earn any credits. Sunday Eucharist becomes fulfilled only when the giving is carried out into the daily living of Monday through Saturday.

Some have complained that our Sunday Eucharists have become a kind of marketplace or a county fair where we no longer find the quiet and isolation of the Upper Room where the Last Supper was celebrated. We must remember that our Eucharist is not just the reenactment of the Last Supper; it is also the Feeding of the 5000, the manna in the desert for a traveling mob, the shaping of the community with all of its concerns and its needs. We cannot hope to recover the "me with Jesus" atmosphere for which some yearn.