

## Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

### Reading 1

[2 Kgs 4:42-44](#)

A man came from Baal-shalishah bringing to Elisha, the man of God, twenty barley loaves made from the firstfruits, and fresh grain in the ear. Elisha said, "Give it to the people to eat." But his servant objected, "How can I set this before a hundred people?" Elisha insisted, "Give it to the people to eat." "For thus says the LORD, 'They shall eat and there shall be some left over.'" And when they had eaten, there was some left over, as the LORD had said.

### Responsorial Psalm

[Ps 145:10-11, 15-16, 17-18](#)

R. (cf. 16) **The hand of the Lord feeds us; he answers all our needs.**

Let all your works give you thanks, O LORD,  
and let your faithful ones bless you.

Let them discourse of the glory of your kingdom  
and speak of your might.

R. **The hand of the Lord feeds us; he answers all our needs.**

The eyes of all look hopefully to you,  
and you give them their food in due season;  
you open your hand  
and satisfy the desire of every living thing.

R. **The hand of the Lord feeds us; he answers all our needs.**

The LORD is just in all his ways  
and holy in all his works.

The LORD is near to all who call upon him,  
to all who call upon him in truth.

R. **The hand of the Lord feeds us; he answers all our needs.**

### Reading II

[Eph 4:1-6](#)

Brothers and sisters:

I, a prisoner for the Lord,  
urge you to live in a manner worthy of the call you have received,  
with all humility and gentleness, with patience,  
bearing with one another through love,  
striving to preserve the unity of the spirit through the bond of peace:  
one body and one Spirit,  
as you were also called to the one hope of your call;  
one Lord, one faith, one baptism;

one God and Father of all,  
who is over all and through all and in all.

## **Gospel**

[Jn 6:1-15](#)

Jesus went across the Sea of Galilee.  
A large crowd followed him,  
because they saw the signs he was performing on the sick.  
Jesus went up on the mountain,  
and there he sat down with his disciples.  
The Jewish feast of Passover was near.  
When Jesus raised his eyes  
and saw that a large crowd was coming to him,  
he said to Philip,  
“Where can we buy enough food for them to eat?”  
He said this to test him,  
because he himself knew what he was going to do.  
Philip answered him,  
“Two hundred days’ wages worth of food would not be enough  
for each of them to have a little.”  
One of his disciples,  
Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, said to him,  
“There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish;  
but what good are these for so many?”  
Jesus said, “Have the people recline.”  
Now there was a great deal of grass in that place.  
So the men reclined, about five thousand in number.  
Then Jesus took the loaves, gave thanks,  
and distributed them to those who were reclining,  
and also as much of the fish as they wanted.  
When they had had their fill, he said to his disciples,  
“Gather the fragments left over,  
so that nothing will be wasted.”  
So they collected them,  
and filled twelve wicker baskets with fragments  
from the five barley loaves  
that had been more than they could eat.  
When the people saw the sign he had done, they said,  
“This is truly the Prophet, the one who is to come into the world.”  
Since Jesus knew that they were going to come and carry him off  
to make him king,  
he withdrew again to the mountain alone.

# HOMILY

This week the readings we just heard are an exception to the norm. As a context, it is worthwhile to explain both the norm and the reason for the exception.

The Gospel readings we hear on Sundays are on a three year cycle: Year A from Matthew, Year B (this year) from Mark, and Year C from Luke. Readings from John's Gospel are usually restricted to Holy Week and the Easter Season. Our lectionary is set up this way so that we are exposed to the theology and different insights of all four of the Evangelists over a three year period.

The exception in Year B is that we interrupt our study of the Gospel of Mark for the next five weeks so that we may reflect on the Bread of Life discourse from the Gospel of John, chapter 6. This discourse begins with the multiplication of the loaves and fishes and is inserted here beginning on the Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time because this is the point in Mark's Gospel where the multiplication occurs.

The reason John's chapter 6 is so important is because the Gospel of John does not have a Last Supper narrative as the other three Gospels do. Their understandings of the Eucharist are given there. For John, the core of his Eucharistic Theology is in chapter 6 and in Jesus "giving thanks" (the Greek verb eucharist) in describing Jesus' actions in the multiplication of the loaves and fishes. Giving thanks, the Eucharist, the Mass is so important to who we are as disciples that to miss John's insights would be a true loss to our comprehension of the Good News. Hence the exception and the next five weeks.

In our first reading, the prophet Elisha's giving the twenty barley loaves to the people to eat, have their fill, and with some left over is seen as the framework for the Gospels' stories of the multiplication of the loaves and fishes. For John, this event is situated near the Jewish feast of Passover; and Jesus' action of taking the loaves and fishes, "giving thanks", and distributing them is seen as Jesus' reinterpretation of the Passover with a Eucharistic theme. This multiplication is the dramatic lead-in to the Bread of Life discourse that we will hear and discuss in the following weeks.

Note, at the end of this passage, Jesus withdraws from the crowd who was going to make him king. Just as in Rome, where free bread and circuses kept the hoi polloi happy, so too is Israel a free lunch could make you royal.

For Jesus, the heart of the Eucharist is not about any political kingship but rather about achieving the will of his Father.

As so often happens with our Sunday readings, the second one seems out of place with the first and the Gospel but is, in fact, the key to interpreting them. Paul to the Ephesians offers a "moral exhortation" for living the Christian life. Paul lists the virtues of a true disciple of

Christ: humility, gentleness, patience, bearing with one another through love, and striving to preserve the unity of the Spirit. The reason for these strengths, according to Paul, is to maintain the sevenfold unity that keeps us Christians together and unique: one body, one spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all.

The newspapers tell us today that 1 in 8 Americans is struggling with hunger and that 1 in 6 people worldwide is malnourished. WWJD? What would Jesus do? We just heard in the Gospel what Jesus would and did do. In response to Paul's moral exhortation, what should we do? The answer is obvious and complex and expensive and, like health care for all, would cost us dearly. But the answer is obvious, especially for us in the Piedmont Avenue gourmet ghetto. What will we do: in our charity? at the ballot box? through our taxes?

For the next four weeks, we will explore the shock, the disbelief, the division, and the misunderstandings that Jesus' disciples displayed as John talks about the Bread of Life. For now, remember that our understanding of the Body and Blood of Christ begins with hunger and loaves of bread and fish. Hunger and what we do about it is a starting point for Eucharist and giving God thanks and also the conclusion of what the Body and Blood of Christ are all about.

As we continue this Eucharist/Thanksgiving service, let us praise God for the Bread of Life that nourishes us as a Christian community and let us give God thanks by the way we allow that Bread of Life to challenge us as disciples of Christ.

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