

Homily of Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A, 2026

Isaiah 55:1-3; Psalm 145:8-9,15-18; Romans 8:35, 37-39; Matthew 14:13-21

The first reading is God's message of consolation to the Jewish exiles in Babylon. At that time, the exiles were in despair and desolation. Many of them no longer trusted that God was going to take care of them. Through Prophet Isaiah, God called upon them: "All you who are thirsty, come to the water! You who have no money, come, receive grain and eat; come without paying and without cost, drink wine and milk! Why spend your money for what is not bread; your wages for what does not satisfy? ... Come to me heedfully, listen, that you may have life. I will renew with you everlasting covenant, the benefits assured to David."

This message is very relevant to us during these difficult and trying times. In one way or another, we are all hungry, thirsty, and sick. God, the origin and source of life, invites us, "Come to me heedfully, listen, that you may have life." The Collect prayer of last Sunday's Mass reminds us that without God nothing is holy and nothing has firm foundation. Why, then, spend our money for what is not "bread" and wages for "what does not satisfy"? That is, why, then, seek satisfaction and solutions in worldly and ungodly things?

In the gospel, Jesus withdrew himself to a deserted place to mourn the death of his cousin, John the Baptist. The vast crowd discovered where he went and followed him. Jesus was moved with pity and cured the sick among them, and miraculously fed the hungry crowd with five loaves and two fish. Although Jesus was grieving, he did not turn the people away. Someone called Jesus "The Wounded Healer." John 6:37 says, "All that the Father gives to me come to me, and whoever comes to me, I shall not turn away."

We pray that difficult and trying times do not weaken our faith or make us lose our faith in God. St. Paul encourages us in the second reading that anguish, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, or sword must not separate us from the love of Christ. St. Paul adds, "No, in all these things we conquer overwhelmingly through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor present things, nor future things, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." No matter what comes our way, "we conquer overwhelmingly" if we are close to God through Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 13:6 says, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever." His saving grace and miraculous deeds remain abundant in our time. Let us, therefore, accept God's invitation in our moments of exile, desert, thirst and hunger, sickness, heavy burden, despair, and desolation. These are not the moments to seek solutions and satisfaction outside God ("spend your money for what is not bread; your wages for what does not satisfy").

In the gospel, when it was evening, the disciples said to Jesus, “‘This is a deserted place and it is already late; dismiss the crowds so that they can go to the villages and buy food for themselves.’ Jesus said to them, ‘There is no need for them to go away; give them some food yourselves.’” Jesus could have decided not to attend to the crowd because it was a time of a great loss for him, the murdering of his cousin, John the Baptist. Jesus could have listened to his disciples’ suggestion to dismiss the crowd so that they could “go to the villages and buy food for themselves.” But he did not.

By his action, Jesus taught his disciples and teaches us a few lessons: to have hearts of compassion for people in need; that our difficulties and limitations should not be excuses to neglect or dismiss those in need; to be wounded healers like him; and that God multiplies abundantly his blessings when we share the little we have with the needy. We are invited not only to share material things but also our presence, time, talent, etc., with the needy.

In one of his homilies, St. Basil the Great challenges those who are slow in charity: “You avoid meeting people in case you might be obliged to part with even a little of what you have. You can say only one thing: ‘I have nothing to give you. I am only a poor man.’ Indeed, you are poor and utterly destitute. Poor in love, poor in humanity, poor in faith in God...” (On Charity 3, 6).

A few Sundays ago, we reflected on how the widow of Zarephath shared with Elijah a handful of flour and a little jar of oil, the only food that remained for her and her son. What was the result? God multiplied the flour and the oil and “She was able to eat for a year, and Elijah and her son as well; the jar of flour did not go empty, nor the jug of oil run dry...” (1 King 17:7-16).

God multiplies his blessings for those who trust in him, who come to him, and who have a charitable heart.

Fr. Martin Eke, MSP