

Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time – July 25, 2021 – Good Shepherd Parish

Scripture Reading: 2 Kings 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.

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.

Second Reading: Ephesians 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: John 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.



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INVITATION TO PRAY

Pause for a few moments of silence and enter more deeply into the presence of God.

Proclaim the Scriptures out loud.

As you listen to the scriptures be attentive to a word, a phrase, a question, an image, or a feeling that emerges. Reflect on this quietly or share it aloud.

INVITATION TO REFLECT

If today has been “one of those days” for you, meaning stressful and tiring, maybe you could let the readings for Sunday bring you home for a while. Look especially at the Second Reading, taken from the letter to the Ephesians. It calls us to •*live with humility*. Humility means to accept all that you are and all you are not. Relax. You do not have to be God in order to be beloved. Lives that have a great need to be huge and greatly respected and listened to and in control are based on fear, not humility. Try to accept, gradually, the love God has for you, the love that makes you safe. You are who you are. •*Live with gentleness*. This can be a little more difficult. Commercials say that women have to be always beautiful or be rejected. They must be happy with their detergent, take care of others, be as strong as men, keep up the social calendar and have a full time job as well. These are some of the pressures advertising puts on women. Plus, they have to “matter,” going on the largest march in the history of this country. Relax. God is the gentlest acceptor of all, milder than any product, milder than the air we breathe. Relax. You are enough. We are each loved by the infinitely gentle God. As far as that goes, culture tells males that gentleness is just for women and children. Men used to be tough, all tough, and only tough. Relax. Yes, men’s and women’s bodies and minds have the capacity to be strong, but peace comes from balancing this nature with tenderness toward our mates, our families, our religious brothers and sisters, our elders, our friends.

•*Live with patience*. Patience can be defined as “bearing pains or trials calmly or without complaint.” This is a good enough definition, but did you know that the Latin origin of the word patience (*patior*) means “to allow, or to acquiesce”? We are to allow the gift of life in all its forms, not push it away because there is too much else to do. God gives us our selves one minute at a time, one hour after the other, not all at once. If you want to “have it all and have it now” you are going against your nature. Each moment, each flower, each step is precious if we take time to “let it be.” Accept the gifts of the compassionate giver and let the clock have a rest. •*Bear with one another through love*. Think how wonderful it would be if someone were to bear with you, even when you mess up. You would not have to be anything but your own adequate self, loved by God, able to bear up under the surprisingly light burden of loving others. •*Finally, it calls us “to preserve the unity of the spirit through the bond of peace.”* One Lord, one faith, one Baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all (Second Reading). We are all to keep this Lord before our eyes. The God who gives lasting peace. This is our hope. This is our call. This is the “barley loaf,” the “one bread” we will receive in our very hands on Sunday (First Reading and Gospel). One bread, one body, one Lord of all.

INVITATION TO GROUP SHARING

1. Elisha knows that twenty loaves won’t be enough to feed the crowd. He must trust God over his own logic. Is this leap-of-faith kind of trust ever required in your life? Does such trust become easier with practice? Feeding everyone is very important in these readings. How important is feeding the hungry to you today?
2. Which would be better, to preserve the peace by not talking to anyone with whom we disagree, or to preserve the unity by staying and talking out the problem?
3. What do you think God is more likely to do, miraculously drop food where there is starvation or inspire people to help their neighbors solve their problems? If the latter, how can you help (through the Holy Spirit) in third world countries, your city, diocese, parish, office, or neighborhood?

INVITATION TO ACT

Determine a specific action (individual or group) that flows from your sharing. When choosing an individual action, determine what you will do and share it with the group. When choosing a group action, determine who will take responsibility for different aspects of the action. These should be your primary considerations.

CLOSING INVITATION TO PRAY

Give thanks to God (aloud or silently) for new insights, for desires awakened, for directions clarified, for the gift of one another’s openness and sensitivity. Conclude with the following:

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. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen

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Prayer to St. Michael

St. Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle. Be our defense against the wickedness and snares of the Devil. May God rebuke him, we humbly pray, and do thou, O Prince of the heavenly hosts, by the power of God, thrust into hell Satan, and all the evil spirits, who prowl about the world seeking the ruin of souls. Amen