

Lectionary Faith-Sharing Community

17TH ORDINARY SUNDAY

Cycle B - July 25, 2021

OPENING PRAYER

Guide: *It is good to give thanks to the Lord, to sing praise to your name, Most High.*

All: **The just one shall flourish like the palm tree, like a cedar of Lebanon shall he grow.**

Leader: *They that are planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God.*

All: **They shall bear fruit even in old age; vigorous and sturdy shall they be.**

Guide: *We invoke the presence of the Holy Spirit:*

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love. Send, Lord your spirit and renew the face of the earth. Oh God, that you have instructed the hearts of your faithful with the light of the Holy Spirit, grant us through the same spirit that always enjoy her divine consolation. By Christ, our Lord. Amen.



FIRST 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.

In the two books of Kings we find the narration of the prophet Elijah, and of his disciple and follower of his work, Elisha. Already towards the second of these books, the emphasis is placed on the person of Elisha, after Elijah is taken to heaven in a chariot of fire. We can read many miracles and wonders that God worked through his servant Elisha. Many of these miracles are related to an abundance of food, such as water, oil, bread.

The passage we are reading today is very clear: With just twenty loaves offered to him, Elisha manages to feed a hundred people. We note Elisha's trust in God, which stands out even more before the unbelief of his servant.

A couple of details are worth highlighting: First, the prophet uses some loaves brought as offerings to Yahweh (that is, the first fruits) to perform this prodigy. In other words, what is offered to God returns to men multiplied. And second, that Elisha, unlike the false prophets who seek to create a cult of his personality, seeks to go as unnoticed as possible. Elisha does not want to promote himself with the miracle that he will perform, which is evidenced by the formula he uses to convince his servant that the loaves will be enough for everyone ("This is what the Lord says ..."). As an additional detail, we note that the loaves offered by the Baal-Salisá man were barley, not wheat. This means that he was poor, since the barley is of inferior quality. From this detail we can draw the conclusion of the generosity of those who do not cling to their possessions and who practice the spirit of poverty.



(1) You don't have to be poor to practice the spirit of poverty. You also don't have to be rich to live with an inordinate love for things and possessions. Read Matthew 5: 3 and discuss what Jesus meant.

(2) Did you know that before Jesus Christ, in the Old Testament, a multiplication of the loaves is narrated? Do you know of any other biblical passages in which God feeds his people? What meaning do you give to these stories?

(3) Reread the last five words of this reading. How can we interpret and apply these words in our lives?

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.

The letter that Paul wrote to the Christians in Ephesus contains several parts, or sections. We remember his introduction, for example, in the tone of a hymn of praise that at the same time refreshes us the concepts of God and the incarnate Son. In another of these "sections", Paul dedicates himself to exhorting, to suggesting practical ideas of coexistence and ways of living community love.

Today's reading comes from this section. Paul begins by reminding his friends that he is in prison, not for being a criminal, but for preaching the word of God. That is to say, instead of being daunted and throwing himself into personal abandonment, frustrated because "God abandoned him" as someone without faith might say, the apostle dedicates himself to encouraging his fellow Christians in the churches that he has founded in different places.

We read the advice that Paul gives on how to live in community. Love cannot be lacking, it is necessary to maintain unity. But love is not an "idea" or a "feeling." Love is something that is expressed, and it is manifested in behaviors like those mentioned by Paul: humility, meekness and patience.

- (1) What does it mean to "be humble"?
- (2) What does it mean to "be meek"?
- (3) What does it mean to "be patient"?
- (4) Read 1 Corinthians 13:4-7. How many virtues or attributes are related to the practice of love?
- (5) Give ideas and examples about the best way to exercise and implement these virtues in our lives.
- (6) Read again the second paragraph of this passage after answering these questions and meditate on the unity that is expected to exist among all Christians.

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.

Every three years, when the Gospel of Mark (Liturgical Year B) is read at Masses, a change occurs from the 17th Sunday in ordinary time. For five consecutive Sundays, instead of going on with the Gospel of Mark, passages taken from chapter six of the Gospel of John are proclaimed. It has been called the "Bread of Life discourse." This Sunday we hear the first 15 verses of this chapter, the longest in the entire New Testament.

If we remember, last Sunday we read in the Gospel that a multitude followed Jesus Christ, who decided to isolate himself with his disciples by taking a boat to the other shore of Lake Galilee. But when he arrived, people were already waiting for him. The gospel, we remember, said that Jesus felt great compassion for those people, starved for faith. But it also happens, and it is very normal, that after spending a day in the footsteps of the Divine Master, they also felt tired and hungry. And once again, Jesus Christ shows his compassion for these people and offers them rest and food, as read in this week's Gospel.

The text mentions that Jesus took the loaves, and after thanking God, he distributed them. This gesture of giving thanks to God is summed up in a Greek word: "eucharistéin", which is where the word eucharist comes from. And that is precisely what chapter six of the Gospel of John is about, which will be presented to us in the coming weeks. It is a very special opportunity to reflect on the true meaning of the Eucharist.

This week's text concludes with the comment that Jesus Christ does not allow himself to be proclaimed king. He does not want his mission to be misrepresented. I imagine that he also does not want us to change the true meaning of what the Eucharist means. Therefore, we will be able to nourish ourselves with his own explanations during the coming weeks. Let's not waste this opportunity.



(1) Read Psalm 23. Compare with the gospel and see how many things in the psalm are fulfilled in this text.

(2) A young man offers his barley loaves. This means that he was very poor. The story says that "... there were only about five thousand men ..." It is quite possible that in that crowd more than one had some bread, but only the barley of that poor man is mentioned. What conclusions can be drawn from this?

(3) Does this passage have any Eucharistic symbolism?

CLOSING PRAYER

Leader: *Lord of the day and night, of the beginning and of the end: At the closing of this meeting, once again we lift up our hearts to You, divine source of all life.*

All: **We thank you for the gifts you have bestowed on us. We thank you for the love expressed in companionship and understanding, mutual respect and shared ideas. We give you thanks for your holy power that will help us in our concerns that we have shared. For these and all the gifts that come from You, we give you thanks.**

Leader: *Lord hear our prayers* (attendees can propose their own needs of prayer)

All: **In the same way in which we have being blessed by your presence as we meet, we ask now to bless our safe return to our homes. May your holy blessing be over us + in the name of the Father ...**

Leader: *May the King of the eternal glory gather us together in His heavenly banquet. Amen.*