

Homily Notes and Suggestions

World Day of Grandparents and Elderly

July 25, 2021

17th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B

First Reading: 2 Kings 4:42-44

Psalm: Psalm 145:10-11, 15-16, 17-18 (R. 16)

Second Reading: Ephesians 4:1-6

Gospel: John 6:1-15

This Sunday marks the beginning of our reading of the “Bread of Life” discourse from the Gospel of John, which is used to supplement the Year B readings from the Gospel of Mark. The themes of God’s providence, trust in the Lord, and abundant nourishment emerge from today’s readings, offering us many ways to reflect on God’s gift of love to us through the witness of faith of our grandparents.

First Reading: 2 Kings 4:42-44

The prophet Elisha continued the ministry of Elijah in the Northern Kingdom of Israel during the middle of the ninth century BC. Elisha was known for his miracles, and in this passage his mediation between God and the people ensures that there is enough to eat for everyone, despite a time of famine (2 Kings 4:38). Notably, the twenty loaves of barley and fresh ears of grain were intended as an offering to God (v. 42), yet Elisha instructs the man from Baal-shalishah to share them among the people instead. This reminds us that authentic worship of God involves care for others, and in turn God’s providence becomes palpable, as is manifest in the abundance of food left over. In reflecting upon the gift of our grandparents, consider how their witness of faith, self-sacrifice, and concern for our well-being have shaped us into the people we are today.

Psalm: Psalm 145:10-11, 15-16, 17-18 (R. 16)

Psalm 145 expresses praise for God from “one generation ... to another” (v. 4). In the portion of the psalm that we sing today, the psalmist emphasizes God’s steadfast love and faithfulness to the people, who in turn praise God for the support and nourishment they receive.

Second Reading: Ephesians 4:1-6

In this letter, Paul encourages the community in Ephesus to remain cohesive and patient with one another. Verses 4-6 articulate the “seven unities of the Church” upon which the Church depends: one body (which is Christ’s body, the Church), one Spirit, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God and Father of all (vv. 4-5).

Gospel: John 6:1-15

The Gospel reading comes from the beginning of the Bread of Life discourse, in which Jesus will reveal that he is the eternally nourishing bread of life (John 6:51). In the portion that we read today, Jesus crosses the sea (6:1), leads a crowd (6:2), and goes up onto a mountain (6:3) – actions that echo Moses’ leadership of the people in Exodus. When the crowd is gathered, and Jesus “had given thanks” (eucharisteō), the bread and fish donated by a young boy become a nourishing meal for about five thousand people, with twelve baskets of leftovers. The baskets of leftovers suggest that this bread, broken and shared in thankfulness, continues to nourish the people even beyond the immediate moment. In keeping with the theme of Grandparents Day, we are invited to reflect on how our grandparents’ life experiences might shape our own. We can ask them, “what ‘bread’ of life experiences can you share with me?”