

6th Sunday after Pentecost- EF 2014
Mark 8: 1-9

The Feeding of the 4000 was very similar to the Feeding of the 5000, which Jesus had accomplished only months earlier in Jewish territory. There are echoes to the manna received in the Wilderness, God's provision of food for his people, the anticipation of the Last Supper, and the pledge of the messianic banquet of Heaven.ⁱ

And yet there are some subtle yet pointed differences between the two events.

The first Feeding ministered to the Jews.
The second Feeding ministered to Gentiles in the area of the Decapolis, the area of the ten cities.

The first occurred on a day of Jesus' preaching.
The second tells us of a people who had been following Jesus' way for three days.
We can allow that description to prepare us for Jesus' prediction of the three days he would take to rebuild the Temple, his death and resurrection.

In the first, Jesus had preached about his compassion for the crowd as leaderless sheep without a shepherd.
It had been his disciples who brought the crowd's need for food to Jesus' attention.
In the second, Jesus didn't preach about the Good Shepherd but was moved to compassion because of the *hunger of the crowd*.

"The second feeding provides a more vivid picture of Jesus as one who observes human suffering and meets human needs."ⁱⁱ

And, *They ate and were satisfied*. [check the English translation]

Who are the hungry today?
We don't have to look far.
We don't even have to look further than our own hunger, although we are cautioned not to confuse our just hunger with our desires for pleasure, possession, power and position.

While hungry ourselves, we are called to his Eucharistic Table, to take our seven loaves of bread and a few fish, offer them up to Jesus for his blessing

and then to distribute to the hungry.

Who are the hungry?

We don't have to look far.

In our own families, we have loved ones who are hungry, for food, for shelter, for love, for stability and hope.

Families are messy.

Those in need may not be cooperative.

They may be ornery.

They may have embraced life decisions contrary to the teachings of the Church and our own family traditions.

They may be bent and broken.

But then so am I bent and broken.

I am so grateful that Jesus doesn't reject me because of my brokenness, but actually comes to me in my brokenness,

to heal me of my brokenness,

to straighten out my bent parts

and lead me to joy.

Who are the hungry?

Again, we do not have to look far.

Here on the Eastside, our parish, we have neighbors who are hungry.

Of our Eastside children, 60% live below the poverty line.

St. Mary's does reach out to them.

More personally, *you* reach out to them.

Through your contributions to the St. Christopher Fund, scores of families have been helped who had found themselves in desperate straits.

Through our volunteer parishioners, food is distributed to over a dozen families a week at our Eastside Loaves and Fishes food pantry.

Some of that comes from your weekly donations of food in our basket in the vestibule, which is sponsored by our Knights of Columbus.

At the end of this month, our Ladies Sodality, in cooperation with our Knights, will be sponsoring an intensive food drive, to give a boost to our contributions as the summer months bring an additional need with kids home on school vacation.

In our bulletin, you'll find a cry for volunteers from Peace House, which is hosting weekly events for our Eastside children to help broaden their

experiences of the world.

Did you know that many of our Eastside children have never been more than 5 miles away from home?

All of this is good.

It is good for us to be good.

But it's not so much because we are racking up good points to be redeemed in the hereafter.

We cannot earn enough points to obtain redemption.

It is good because we first experience the compassion of Christ in our own hunger.

After we experience his love, how can our hearts resist sharing his love?

I am the one privileged to distribute your St. Christopher Fund support to families in crisis.

If you could only hear their gratitude it would bring tears to your eyes.

When we distribute food at the pantry, we hear the families' stories.

They are all so grateful and so humble.

But additionally, I hear their stories of faith in God, of their reliance and trust in our Savior's love.

Their humble faith in their desperate circumstances makes me blush and inspires me to embrace Jesus ever more completely, ever more desperately, ever more dependently.

They are not the only ones being fed.

We come closer to living in the very heart of Christ.

ⁱ Daniel J. Harrington, S.J., *The Gospel of Matthew, Sacra Pagina*, p. 242.

ⁱⁱ John R. Donahue, S.J. & Daniel J. Harrington, S.J., *The Gospel of Mark, Sacra Pagina*, p. 246