

## *ctkAlive!* Scripture Study

### 18<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time 2020—A Cycle Readings



*Miracle of the Loaves and Fishes*  
[Jacques Joseph Tissot](#) (1836-1902)

*Note:* For your convenience and to broaden your benefit from this and all sessions in this series, we have added links to books, authors, and other references mentioned in the text.

**Caution:** Links to the internet are like rabbits dashing across a hunter's path. Instinct says, "Leave the reflection and chase after that link!" Instead, we suggest waiting until you have followed the entire reflection. Then take all the time you wish to follow these interesting and educational links. **Exception:** In the course of the lesson, you may have an opportunity to watch or listen to a relevant song or video.

### **Opening Prayer**

*(edited and abridged for use here)*

God of our hopes and dreams,  
we are empty and long to be filled;  
we are hungry and long to be fed;  
we are lost and long to be found.

Gather us into your love  
and pick up the pieces of our lives,  
just as Jesus gathered up the fragments  
of the five loaves and two fish  
that remained after feeding the five thousand.

Call us anew to eat our fill  
and find our true nourishment in Jesus, Your son,  
the bread of heaven. Amen.

— Adapted from The Abingdon Worship Annual 2009, © 2008 Abingdon Press.  
Posted on the [Ministry Matters](#) website.

## Introduction the 18<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time

This week's readings invite us to remember and have faith in our God's desire to feed and nourish us along the zig-zag path of our daily lives. Then, why do we think we are in total control and need divine help only when the going gets really tough?

Isaiah 55: 1-3 "Come all you who are thirsty, come to the water!"

What a wonderful, comforting invitation. The Prophet offers these words to women and men of faith. Rejecting Yahweh's gift can only result only in spiritual emptiness.

*Note: The historical Isaiah is known to have written the first 35 chapters of the book bearing his name. Another unnamed prophet (or two) wrote the section we read today. It is believed that those later writings became attached to what we now have in the Book of Isaiah.*

Psalms 145: 8-9, 15-18 "The hand of the Lord feeds us; he answers all our needs."

The history of God's chosen people might have played out differently had they *listened*—really listened—to the words they sang and prayed! No wars! No exiles fleeing to safer shores! No rejection of their Messiah when he arrived in "the fullness of time"!

*To gain better insight into the psalms, follow this link to [US Catholic Magazine's](#) July 2020 article on biblical poetry, authored by [Rebecca Bratten Weis](#), writer, lecturer, and gardener residing in rural Ohio.*

Romans 8: 35, 37-39 "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" What a promise to the precarious communities at Rome! Several years after writing Romans, Paul joined them in the capital of the empire and died with them ca. 64 AD/CE as a fellow martyr (possibly with the very words on his lips that he had written to them earlier).

Matthew 14: 13-21 "Jesus said to the apostles, 'You give (the crowd) something to eat.' They said, 'We have nothing here but five loaves and two fishes.'" Yet, another example of God's compassion for *all* humans (worthy or unworthy), in this life and at the hour of death.

"There are six accounts of the multiplication of the loaves in the New Testament, five in the Synoptic Gospels (Mk 6: 31-44 and Mk 8: 1-9; Mt 14: 13-21 and Mt 15: 29-38; Lk 9: 10-17) and one in the Gospel of John (6: 1-15). The details of these accounts vary, but most scholars hold that, underlying all the accounts, is at least one historical event where Jesus performed this miracle (which the Gospels call a "work of power") or a 'sign,' as John the Evangelist describes it, involving the transformation of a small amount of food into a feast at which all are satisfied, with some food even left over to take home with them."

—[Michael Joncas](#), priest, [composer](#), and an artist in residence at the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul. Source: [The Catholic Spirit](#).

### **First Reading from the Book of Isaiah 55: 1-3**

“Listen to me, you who pursue justice, you who go in search of Yahweh. Look to the rock from which you were hewn, to the pit from which you were quarried. Look to Abraham, your father, and to Sarah, who gave you birth. He was alone when I called him, but I blessed and increased him. Truly, Yahweh’s compassion is for Zion, his mercy, is upon all her ruins. He will make her deserts like Eden, her wastelands like Yahweh’s garden. In her will be found joy and rejoicing, melody and song of praise and thanksgiving.”

### **Personal Reflection**

We might reword Yahweh’s message to the prophet in this way: “Don’t forget where you came from.” Or, “Don’t reinvent the wheel.”

— *How conscious am I that my Catholic faith today is built on the foundation of Abraham’s amazing act of faith, made around 4000 years ago? What does Isaiah say to me about my link to Abraham? About me? About the kind of God who gifted both Abraham and me with the grace of faith?*

— *In these times of ecological crisis, how am I doing my part to restore our planet to the time when our Creator “will make (our) deserts like Eden, (our) wastelands like Yahweh’s garden.”*

### **Antiphon: Psalm 145: 8-9, 15-18**

*The hand of the Lord feeds us;  
He answers all our needs.*

Praise to the God of victories.  
Compassionate and gracious is Yahweh, slow to anger and abounding in love.  
Yahweh is good to everyone; his mercy embraces all his creation.

*The hand of the Lord feeds us;  
He answers all our needs.*

All creatures look to you to be fed in due season;  
with open hand, you satisfy the living, according to their needs.

*The hand of the Lord feeds us;  
He answers all our needs.*

Righteous is Yahweh in all his ways, his mercy shows in all his deeds.  
He is near those who call on him, who call trustfully upon his name.  
He fulfills the wish of those who fear him; he hears their cry and saves them.

*The hand of the Lord feeds us;  
He answers all our needs.*

### Personal Reflection

“All creatures look to you to be fed in due season; with open hand, you satisfy the living, according to their needs.”

— *Can I recall the last time I called upon Yahweh God “to feed me” in some way, physically and/or spiritually? Can I bring that memory to life again? Based on my experience, in what way can I personally identify with the above quote from the Psalm 145?*

— *How do I reconcile God’s desire to feed the hungry, in light of local, national, and global hunger and malnutrition in the year 2020? What am I doing help God in the work of “feeding the hungry”?*

— *Through these weekly reflections on weekend liturgies, how has my appreciation of those 3,000-year-old song/prayers grown? In what way specifically?*

### **Second Reading: From St. Paul’s Letter to the Romans 8: 35, 37-39**

“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Will it be *trials*, or *anguish*, *persecution* or *hunger*, *lack of clothing*, or *dangers* or sword? No, in all of this, we are more than conquerors, thanks to him, who has loved us. I am certain, that neither death nor life, neither angels nor spiritual powers, neither the present nor the future, nor cosmic powers, were they from heaven, or from the deep world below, nor any creature whatsoever, will separate us from the love of God, which we have, in Jesus Christ, our Lord.”

### Personal Reflection

“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Will it be trials, or anguish, persecution or hunger, lack of clothing, or dangers or sword?”

In recent years, many of our fellow parishioners (and many Catholics worldwide) have walked away from active participation in the Eucharist and other opportunities for spiritual and communal growth. They may have reasons within and outside our local and worldwide faith communities, but their absence is a cause of sorrow to us who have found reasons to stay with our local faith communities. The Risen Christ does not love them less for their decision. Yet, those of us “left behind” (“the remnant”) mourn their absence.

— *If there is someone in my immediate family today, who finds no reason to participate in Church/parish life and mission, how do I become a Christlike missionary within my own home and family circle? What is my mission to them for Jesus?*

— *If I fear for their eternal salvation, how can Paul's words—"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?"—turn my fear into confident hope-based faith for our "absent ones" destination in the arms of our all-forgiving Savior?*

### **Proclamation from the Gospel according to Matthew (14: 13-21)**

"Jesus set out by boat for a secluded place, to be alone. But the people heard of it, and they followed him on foot from their towns. When Jesus went ashore, he saw the crowd gathered there, and he had compassion on them, and he healed their sick.

"Late in the afternoon, his disciples came to him and said, 'We are in a lonely place and it is now late. You should send these people away, so that they can go to the villages and buy something for themselves to eat.'

"But Jesus replied, 'They do not need to go away; you give them something to eat.'

"They answered, 'We have nothing here but five loaves and two fishes.'

"Jesus said to them, 'Bring them here to me.' Then he made everyone sit down on the grass. He took the five loaves and the two fishes, raised his eyes to heaven, pronounced the blessing, broke the loaves, and handed them to the disciples to distribute to the people. And they all ate, and everyone had enough. Then, the disciples gathered up the leftovers, filling twelve baskets. About five thousand men had eaten there, besides women and children."

### **Personal Reflection**

In this passage, we witness a "wiped out" Jesus. He has given his followers all he can for one day. He really needs to get away alone for a while to sail away and pray—and recharge his internal batteries. No such luck! Rumors of his destination spread among the people, and they follow on foot. By the time they find him it is late and they are hungry, with no eating places or markets nearby.

— *When was the last time I had that same feeling—today perhaps?—and just couldn't get away from those who kept demanding my time and energy? How did I handle myself on that occasion?*

— *When I do manage to get away from work, family, or other obligations, where do I go and how do I like to spend my "me-time"? When feelings of guilt creep into my spiritual quiet space, how do I handle them?*

## **Shelter-in-Place**

We are all discouraged by the expanding growth of the corona virus in California and many other states. None of us foresaw such an extended need to shelter-in-place and take extraordinary precautions.

— *What encouragement do I receive from these words of St. Paul to the communities at Rome? “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Will it be trials, or anguish, persecution or hunger, lack of clothing, or dangers or sword? No, in all of this, we are more than conquerors, thanks to him, who has loved us.”*

— *How would I describe my interior mood this week, when I contemplate the ongoing restrictions on my freedom to move about, congregate, and socialize? What do I miss most about my life as it “used to be”?*

— *If I have school-age children, how will the switch from classroom to online learning affect my family? Especially if I am dealing with the prospect of ongoing restrictions on my work and my life in community with family, friends, and fellow parishioners?*

Write about your feelings and your lived experience during your journaling time (below).

## **Journaling Prompts**

What insights have I gained from reflecting on the parable-laden readings for the 18<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Ordinary Time and my current social demands and restrictions. Suggested prompts:

— *After reflecting on these readings, what made the deepest impression on me?*

We mustn't simply be grateful “recipients” of God's good gifts. We need to be “givers,” too.

— *How will this week's Scriptures and current societal events impact the way I think, live, love—and “give back”—during the week ahead?*

## **For Inspirational Reading / Listening**

You'll find a reenactment of the [multiplication of loaves](#) and fishes on YouTube.

## Song

[Come to the Feast](#) by Michael Joncas

## **Preview of Next Session**

19<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time

I Kings 19: 9, 11-13 “Elijah came to the cave and stayed in it. Then, the word of Yahweh came to him, ‘What are you doing here, Elijah? Go up and stand on the mountain, waiting for me.’”

Psalms 85: 9-14 “Lord let us see your kindness and grant us your salvation.”

Romans 9: 1-5 “I have great sadness and great anguish for the Jews.”

Matthew 14: 22-33 “Jesus came walking on the sea . . . . When (the Apostles) saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, thinking it was a ghost.”

## **Closing Prayer**

*(edited and abridged for use here)*

### **Pastoral Prayer: Loaves and Fish**

(inspired by Matthew 14:15-21, Mark 6:35-44, Luke 9:12-17, John 6:4-13)

Merciful God, we praise you for your unfailing love.  
We praise you for feeding our hunger for bread and for “the bread of life.”  
We praise you for taking our little basket of fish and barley loaves  
and using it to feed others.

Lord, we ask you for your care and healing touch for those who are sick.  
We ask for your compassion on those who are suffering in our world.  
We ask comfort for those who are grieving.

We call upon you, Lord, to empower us  
as we declare who you are to a world who needs you.  
We call upon you, Lord, to inspire us as we seek to inspire others.  
We call upon you, Lord, to strengthen us in our own weakness.

We ask all this in your son’s name. Amen.

— Written by [Rev. Abi Todd](#), woman Episcopal priest, East London, U.K.

## **Questions?**

Send any questions or comments you might have to [algarrotto@comcast.net](mailto:algarrotto@comcast.net)

The Sunday readings are from [Christian Community Bible: Catholic Pastoral Edition](#)

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Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines

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(follow the link above to the novel *Bishop Myriel: In His Own Words*)