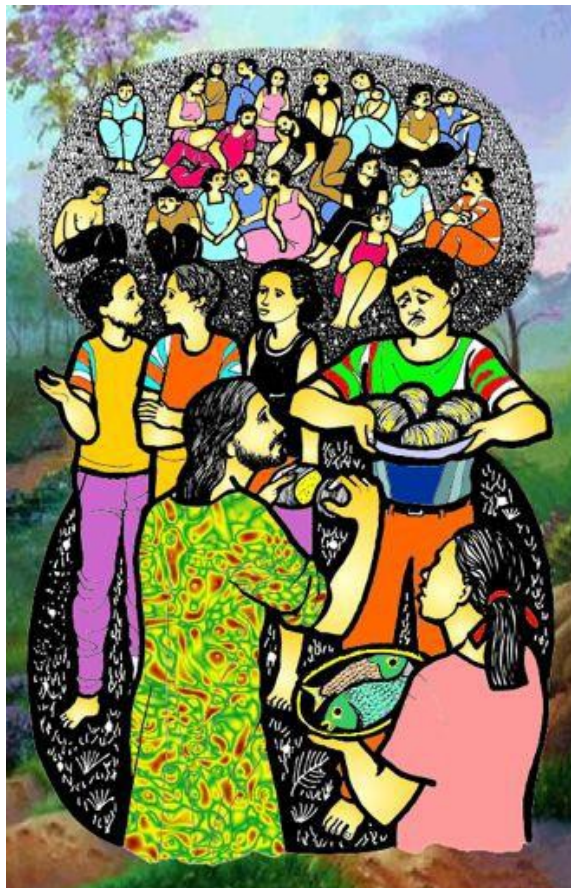


Eighteenth Sunday In Ordinary Time



We believers need to remember
that life was not given to us to make money,
but to become brothers and sisters to one another.
And the point, according to today's Gospel,
is for each of us to contribute our
own small share (our loaves, our talents...).

For the solution to many problems
is not a matter of money, but above all
of solidarity—that is, of the heart.

Reading 1 Isaiah 55:1-3

Thus says the LORD: All you who are thirsty, come to the water!
You who have no money, come, receive grain and eat;
Come, without paying and without cost, drink wine and milk!
Why spend your money for what is not bread; your wages for what
fails to satisfy?
Heed me, and you shall eat well, you shall delight in rich fare.
Come to me heedfully, listen, that you may have life.
I will renew with you the everlasting covenant, the benefits assured
to David.

Responsorial Psalm Psalm 145:8-9, 15-16, 17-18

R. The hand of the Lord feeds us; he answers all our needs

The LORD is gracious and merciful,
slow to anger and of great kindness.
The LORD is good to all and compassionate toward all his works.**R.**
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 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.**

Reading 2 Romans 8:35, 37-39

Brothers and sisters:
What will separate us from the love of Christ?
Will anguish, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness,
or peril, or the sword? No, in all these things we conquer
Overwhelmingly through him who loved us.
For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor
principalities, nor present things, nor future things, nor powers, nor
height, nor depth, nor any other creature will be able to separate
us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Gospel Matthew 14:13-21

When Jesus heard of the death of John the Baptist, he withdrew in a boat to a deserted place by himself.

The crowds heard of this and followed him on foot from their towns.

When he disembarked and saw the vast crowd, his heart was moved with pity for them, and he cured their sick.

When it was evening, the disciples approached him and said, "This is a deserted place and it is already late; dismiss the crowds so that they can go to the villages and buy food for themselves."

Jesus said to them, "There is no need for them to go away; give them some food yourselves."

But they said to him, "Five loaves and two fish are all we have here."

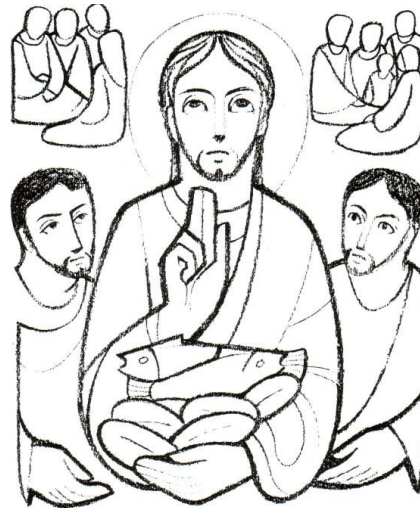
Then he said, "Bring them here to me,"

and he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass.

Taking the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, he said the blessing, broke the loaves, and gave them to the disciples, who in turn gave them to the crowds.

They all ate and were satisfied, and they picked up the fragments left over—twelve wicker baskets full.

Those who ate were about five thousand men, not counting women and children.



HOW TO BLESS THE TABLE?

Almost without realizing it and pushed by various factors, we've gone about dehumanizing little by little that gesture that's so endearing and human of sitting down at table and eating together.

Food has become for many something purely functional that's supposed to be organized quickly and precisely within the work schedule. That privileged moment of family encounter around the table is getting rarer and rarer each day.

In many homes that table that was made to be sat around now isn't used for the parents and children to be together, sharing their lives, conversing and resting together.

Others go about getting used to «feeding their organism» in those impersonal meals at restaurants or at the corner self-service drive-through. Many find themselves obliged to participate in formal or work dinners, where the friendly gesture of eating together is substituted for one of interest, pragmatism or for show.

Jesus' gesture of inviting people to sit down to share together a simple meal, blessing God for the bread we receive, can be a call for us. As Xabier Basurko playfully expounds in his study «Share the Bread», eating is much more than «introducing a determined ration of calories into the organism».

The need to nourish ourselves is above all a sign of our radical abject poverty. Obscurely we human beings perceive that we aren't founded in ourselves. In reality we live by receiving, feeding on a life that, by means of the earth, is gifted to each one day by day. That's why it's a profoundly human gesture to stop ourselves before eating to give thanks to God for those foods, fruit of the effort and work of man, but at the same time, a gift originally from God the Creator who sustains our life.

But in addition, to eat isn't just an individualistic act of biological character. The human being is made to eat with others, sharing our table with family members and friends. To eat together is to fraternize, dialogue, grow in friendship, share the gift of life.

That's why it's so hard to give thanks to God when one has more food than we need while others suffer destitution and hunger. We feel ourselves accused by those words of Gandhi: «Everything that you eat without necessity, you are robbing from the stomach of the poor». Maybe in the countries of plenty we need to learn to bless the table another way: giving thanks to God but at the same time asking forgiveness for our lack of solidarity, and being conscious of our responsibility before the hungry of the Earth.

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