

18 OT Year A Commentary Readings by Dave Pitt:

Debate often swirls around the miracle in today's Gospel: was it miraculous that Jesus was able to multiply five loaves and two fish, or that Jesus was able to convince a crowd of strangers to share their food. To become embroiled in this debate, however, is to miss the real point of the parables. Jesus' teaching and miracles point towards the coming of the Reign of God. Through description and action Jesus articulates what God's kingdom will look like.

Jesus' instruction, "bring them here to me," echoes the invitation in Isaiah: "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." Everyone, regardless of status, is called to the feeding. Since the miracles foreshadow the Kingdom of God we can also say, echoing Romans 8, that since nothing can "separate us from the love of God in Christ," everyone is called to the eternal banquet.

This reality is made more clear by the parallel between the feeding of the five thousand and the Last Supper: Jesus takes the bread, looks up to heaven, says the blessing, breaks the bread, and gives it to the disciples. This description also fits our Eucharistic liturgy. If we are to accept the Church's description of the Eucharist provided in the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, that it is taking "part in a foretaste of [the] heavenly liturgy" (SC, 8), then the relationship between today's miracle and the Reign of God is made abundantly clear.

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Lectionary Summary: Glenn CJ Byer

Debate often swirls around the miracle in today's Gospel was it miraculous that Jesus was able to multiply five loaves and

two fish, or that Jesus was able to convince a crowd of strangers to share their food. To become embroiled in this debate, however, is to miss the real point of the parables. Jesus' teaching and miracles point towards the coming of the Reign of God. Through description and action Jesus articulates what God's kingdom will look like. Jesus' instruction, "bring them here to me," echoes the invitation in Isaiah: "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." Everyone, regardless of status, is called to the feeding. Since the miracles foreshadow the Kingdom of God we can also say, echoing Romans 8, that since nothing can "separate us from the love of God in Christ," everyone is called to the eternal banquet. This reality is made more clear by the parallel between the feeding of the five thousand and the Last Supper: Jesus takes the bread, looks up to heaven, says the blessing, breaks the bread, and gives it to the disciples. This description also fits our Eucharistic liturgy. If we are to accept the Church's description of the Eucharist provided in the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, that it is taking "part in a foretaste of [the] heavenly liturgy" (SC, 8), then the relationship between today's miracle and the Reign of God is made abundantly clear.

First Reading Isaiah 55:1-3

A reading from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah

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.

The word of the Lord

Commentary Isaiah 55:1-3 by Fr. Eugene Hensell, OSB:
Deutero-Isaiah (Is 40-55) is characterized by a message of comfort and encouragement. The audience was the post-exilic Israelites who had been beaten, humiliated, and exiled by the Babylonians in 586 B.C.E. The last chapter of Deutero-Isaiah recapitulates many of the major themes running throughout the entire book. The present brief passage describes a great and wonderful banquet to which the Israelites have been invited. It symbolizes an invitation to abundant life (Is 55:1-3).

Everything about this invitation is abundance beyond imagination. The only requirement seems to be a deep thirst and hunger. Food and drink will be more than plentiful. And the best part is that it is all free. Of course, this invitation is not really about material food and drink, important as that was. It is an invitation to feast on the word of God. This is not something that can be purchased with money. There is no such thing as a suitable substitute for it. It comes in abundance and without a price. The one thing necessary is a profound desire for God.

In this passage eating and drinking are metaphors for listening. Intensified listening to the word of God will lead to an abundance of life. The connecting link between listener and God will be the everlasting covenant God will establish with Israel. Therefore, this generous invitation to a magnificent banquet is in reality a call to freely enter into

covenant with God. This is a call to a relationship which will guarantee the abundance of life. It is the only food and drink that can satisfy Israel's famished longing for God.

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

℟(cf. 16) 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.

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.

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.

Commentary: Psalm 145:8-9, 15-16, 17-18 by John Paul Heil: Main Theme: God satisfies our deepest desire for life.

This psalm is chosen as an accompaniment to today's first and third readings. Indeed, the theme of God "satisfying" us with physical nourishment pointing to our ultimate spiritual satisfaction as well provides the thread that ties this responsorial psalm to both the first reading and the gospel.

In the psalm, by giving everyone "their food in due season," God is the one to "satisfy the desire of every living thing." And our deepest desire is for the eternal life only God can give. This recalls the first reading from Isaiah which calls us to come to God as the only one who can satisfy us with true life: "Why spend your money for what is not bread; your wages for what fails to satisfy?" To be truly satisfied God invites us to "come to me heedfully, listen, that you may have life." And in today's gospel selection from Matthew Jesus, with God's miraculous assistance ("looking up to heaven"), satisfies the physical hunger of the large crowd of over five thousand--"they all ate and were satisfied." This physical satisfaction of the crowd's points to the spiritual satisfaction of our hunger for eternal life, as symbolized by the overabundant amount of fragments left over--"twelve wicker baskets full." Jesus can satisfy us in fulfillment of the psalm--"The Lord is good to all and . . . near to all who call upon him."

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Commentary Second Reading: Romans 8:35, 37-39

No creature will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Romans

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.

The word of the Lord

Gospel Acclamation Matthew 4:4b

✠ Alleluia, alleluia.

One does not live on bread alone,
but on every word that comes forth from the mouth of God

Gospel Matthew 14:13-21

They all ate and were satisfied.

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew

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.

The Gospel of the Lord

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Commentary: Matthew 14:13-21 by Deacon Owen

Cummings: Jesus goes to the desert after hearing of the death of John the Baptist. Soon he is surrounded by a vast throng. The narrative may be interpreted as a Liturgy of the Word followed by a Liturgy of the Eucharist, though not in any tight or detailed sense. First, the Liturgy of the Word. Comparing the story with the parallel story in Mark's Gospel, we observe that Jesus is "moved with pity" to *heal* in Matthew, but to *teach* in Mark [6:34]. The difference, however, is not finally significant. Jesus' compassion is to make people whole, by healing touch, or by healing word. Second, the Liturgy of the Eucharist. The vast throng has been with him until evening and they are hungry. They are like the Israelites wandering in the desert with Moses. The ancient Israelites were provided by God with manna from heaven to satisfy their hunger. The new Israel following Jesus, the new Moses, is fed by the Eucharist. Notice the fourfold action of Jesus: he takes bread, blesses it, breaks it, and gives it to the disciples to give it to the hungry people. And, we are told, there are twelve baskets left over, to take

this Eucharist in mission to the whole of Israel, all twelve tribes, and so, symbolically, to the world.