



Preparing for the Mass of Sunday 2nd August 2026

The 18th Sunday in Ordinary Time — Matthew 14:13-21

Relax

Make the Sign of the Cross † and remain still for a minute of settling silence. Then read the Gospel — preferably aloud and slowly — paying attention to any words that stand out to you.



Read

This Sunday's Gospel : A FAMILY DAY OUT WITH JESUS



When Jesus received the news of John the Baptist's death he withdrew by boat to a lonely place where they could be by themselves. But the people heard of this and, leaving the towns, went after him on foot. So as he stepped ashore he saw a large crowd; and he took pity on them and healed their sick. When evening came, the disciples went to him and said, 'This is a lonely place, and the time has slipped by; so send the people away, and they can go to the villages to buy themselves some food.' Jesus replied, 'There is no need for them to go: give them something to eat yourselves.' But they answered, 'All we have with us is five loaves and two fish.' 'Bring them here to me,' he said. He gave orders that the people were to sit down on the grass; then he took the five loaves and the two fish, raised his eyes to heaven and said the blessing. And breaking the loaves he handed them to his disciples who gave them to the crowds. They all ate as much as they wanted, and they collected the scraps remaining, twelve baskets full. Those who ate numbered about five thousand men, to say nothing of women and children.

Did any words or phrases stand out to you in the Gospel? If so, take a few moments to meditate on them.

Reflect

Now read the Gospel again and consider what the Lord might be saying to you, or asking of you, through it. Then continue by reading Fr Henry Wansbrough's reflection...



Every mother knows the disaster-situation of the family day out when the shops turn out to be closed and the emergency supplies have been left at home. This lot have been following Jesus three days on the trot, and there must have been nothing left at all to eat. Jesus turns the disaster into a party for that huge crowd of people. Left to our own resources we are helpless, but Jesus can deal with that. How many were there? We don't know, for the numbers are symbolic. In the Bible 'twelve' alerts us to the tribes of Israel. So the twelve baskets of scraps show that the crowd is the twelve tribes of Jesus' new Israel. The way Jesus takes the bread and says the blessing must remind any Christian of the Eucharist. So this gigantic field-party was a sort of Eucharist, Jesus at the centre of his people, entertaining them and cheering them. It probably wasn't very orderly. There would have been children enjoying the food and then running around and tripping up themselves and others. An African Mass is often like that, with lots of singing and dancing and celebration. That is why the Sunday Mass is so important: meet your friends and celebrate Christ together! **What does this Gospel teach us about the Eucharist?**

Dom Henry Wansbrough OSB

Rest

Now call to mind the Lord's love for you, remembering that through this scripture the Lord is truly present. Then silently and prayerfully listen for God's voice and rest in God's love.



Respond & Request

Thank God for any insight you may have received, and respond by asking the Holy Spirit to bless you with a spiritual gift or help you to grow in a particular fruit of the Spirit. You might pray for wisdom, courage, faithfulness, self-control, patience, generosity, joy, kindness, love, peace, faith, chastity - or another grace - to help you live out your faith this week.



Remember

This Wednesday's words for our families are **HOLY COMMUNION**
(To see the Family Version, please visit: wednesdayword.org)



As you pray for your loved ones, please remember to pray for the Church and for the families connected to our schools.

St Joseph, Patron Saint of Families and Protector of the Church, pray for us. Mary, Star of Evangelisation, pray for us. Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.



First Reading: *Invitation to the Banquet*



Isaiah 55:1-3

Thus says the Lord: Oh, come to the water all you who are thirsty; though you have no money, come! Buy corn without money, and eat, and, at no cost, wine and milk. Why spend money on what is not bread, your wages on what fails to satisfy? Listen, listen to me and you will have good things to eat and rich food to enjoy. Pay attention, come to me; listen, and your soul will live. With you I will make an everlasting covenant out of the favours promised to David.

Our approach to God and to things divine has two seemingly contrasting aspects. On the one hand we must be aware in awe of the splendour of God and of our own terrifying littleness; this engenders a hushed stillness in us. On the other hand we are filled with joy and celebrate what God has given us. Particularly in Christianity there is the joy of family and community, celebrating our oneness in Christ; the obvious way to celebrate this is a party with noise, food and drink. The readings on this Sunday are all about joy

and celebration, and the first reading and gospel sound as if they are about a party. Isaiah hands us an invitation to the party. Two points are worth making about this invitation in Isaiah. Firstly, it is couched in similar terms to the biblical invitations from God's Wisdom to come and share the banquet prepared by Wisdom for those who wish to learn God's ways. Secondly, it is a fulfilment of the tradition of the covenant which dominates the Old Testament. God made an alliance, an intimate bond, with special promises to Abraham; he renewed it and intensified it with Moses and again with David. When Israel shattered that covenant by constant rebellion, God promised a new covenant, ratified again at a party, at Jesus' Last Supper with his disciples.

The Lord's invitation is to all of us: what is he inviting you to?



Second Reading: *A Celebration of God's Love*



Romans 8:35.37-39

Nothing can come between us and the love of Christ, even if we are troubled or worried, or being persecuted, or lacking food or clothes, or being threatened or even attacked. These are the trials through which we triumph, by the power of him who loved us. For I am certain of this: neither death nor life, no angel, no prince, nothing that exists, nothing still to come, not any power, or height or depth, nor any created thing, can ever come between us and the love of God made visible in Christ Jesus our Lord.

This lively expression of delight and confidence really sums up what God's love for us is all about, as it is manifested and given to us in the saving act of Jesus. In Romans Paul gives us the fullest explanation of just how Christ saves us, and how we are made a new creation and now live by the Spirit of Christ. After that, Paul goes on

to present particular consequences and applications of this. There will be another such outbreak of joy from Paul which we read in three weeks' time (Romans 11:33-36). It is Paul at his best and most ardent. First, just before our reading, comes a series of excited rhetorical questions: 'What can we add?', 'Can anyone condemn?', 'Are we not certain?' Then there is the expression of Paul's total confidence in God's saving love, from which nothing can cut us off. In the biblical mind 7 is the perfect number, signifying completion: Paul first gives 7 hardships and trials which cannot cut us off, then 7 hostile powers which are powerless against the love of God. The message is: there isn't anything that can separate us from the love of God.

Do you sometimes feel that God is distant? What helps us to realise that nothing can separate us from the love of God?

“ **There isn't anything that can separate us from the love of God.** ”