



# THE LORD'S DAY

## 18th Sunday of Year A

The Watermead Apostolate offers this weekly page as a helpful guide and background to the readings used at the Catholic Mass for each Sunday of the Year.

The reading guides were written by Fr John Daley (RIP) who served as a Catholic priest in various parishes around the UK and world for 53 years.

Fr John co-founded Watermead in 1992 as a voice for people who wished to share understanding of living their faith through their God-given gifts and talents.

'The Lord's Day' incorporates some of those voices in this presentation and also through its many publications ~ books, resources, cards, music, etc.

Further information on what we produce, our story and the mission of our Christian apostolate can be found by visiting [www.watermead-apostolate.co.uk](http://www.watermead-apostolate.co.uk)

### First Reading

*Isaiah 55 : 1-3*

We are nearing the end of the Book of Consolation, the second part of Isaiah's writings (chapters 40-55). The book is full of the joy of liberation, of the wonderful Servant of God willing to live and die for God and the people: the Servant is the Messiah. Salvation is brought to the poor of the world (the "anawim"), Jerusalem is brought to life again and the love of God spreads through the world. It is a universal vision.

Today's reading begins a series of promises - reassurances, beautiful short passages of love for the poor ones of the world. There is nourishment for the whole of creation - food and drink for the peoples, water for the earth. The people are invited to come to God to receive life in all its goodness. The Lord provides - water, corn, wine and milk, and food for the soul - the word of God. Here is a new Promised Land ("land of milk and honey"), not only for Israel but for all the world. Chapter 55 develops from the invitation to eat to a new covenant, the closeness of God to the people, the word of God becoming the Word of God (v.11) and the celebration of the whole earth that it will share in God's salvation (vv.12-13).

#### GOD'S LOVE FOR THE WORLD

The world is saved;  
God is a suffering God;  
The world is fed.

*This week I shall . . .  
read the six accounts of the  
feeding of the crowd*

### Second Reading

*Romans 8 :35, 37-39*

Paul has just been talking of the glory awaiting those who believe in and are faithful to God. The rhythms of verse 31-34 suggest we are reading Paul's paraphrase of a Christian hymn. We can share the invincibility of God against earthly and supernatural powers. If God allowed Jesus to die for us there is nothing else we could be refused.

The human understanding of parent/child love is astonishing. All good parents would die for their children - but no good parent would allow their child to be killed for someone else. The paradox in God is that the son, the child, is given to die when it would be better for the Father to die!

The child dies, the parent suffers: the Son dies, the Father suffers. What suffering!

If God's love is this strong then we can be confident of being refused nothing. Our sufferings (lack of food and clothes, fear and persecution) is borne by God in love - and that suffering is greater than ours. Paul sees a helpless suffering God and the supreme sign of that suffering love is - Jesus on the cross . . .

### Wisdom from the Saints



"Bless me,  
O Lord,  
and let  
my food  
strengthen  
me to  
serve you"

Isaac Watts

### Gospel Reading

*Matthew 14 : 13-21*

Here is one of six tellings of the feeding of the crowd. It is worth noting that three of the tellings speak of 5,000, two of 4,000, and today's of 5,000 *plus women and children*. Today's story speaks of five loaves and two fish, but two accounts speak of seven loaves. Two accounts have *seven baskets of scraps* left over and four have *twelve baskets of scraps*. Are we looking at six separate miracles, two separate miracles - or one incident remembered in different ways?

Such questions are interesting. Your student in the classroom, your inquirer from outside the Church, are the people who would certainly want answers. The pious objection "you shouldn't ask such questions" may only be lazy minds that don't want to be bothered. The Church has accepted six tellings of the feeding of a great crowd. It is worth asking why.

Matthew's account makes clear there are villages nearby that could supply the food, even though it is evening. For 20,000 people ("5,000, not counting women and children")! But Jesus tells the apostles they must feed the crowd. It becomes a spiritual story. What Jesus then does recalls the Eucharist at the Last Supper - he takes the loaves, blesses them, breaks them and gives them to the apostles for the crowd. It is Eucharist! The ministers of the Church are serving the people in Christ's name.

### Questions of Faith

#### Not Counting Women and Children

Matthew's accounts of the feeding of the 5,000 and 4,000 end "not counting women and children". The number suggested becomes four or five times greater! What does Matthew mean that Mark, Luke and John do not intend? We recall the exodus from Egypt - when "600,000 men, not counting women and children" began the journey to the Promised Land. Three million people and their flocks and herds . . . The numbers are biblical, symbolic. Matthew is consciously aware . . .

### People of God

**The Daughter** was enjoying looking at family photographs from over the many years. There was one of her mother in her early 20's (the mother now in her late 70's). "Hey, Mum, weren't you pretty!" "What do you mean?" said the father - "she still is." The mother smiled wryly: "Oh, no, just look at the contrast between me as I am now and as I was then. "The husband said "You haven't changed." The daughter was thrilled and shared the moment with her brothers and sisters, and it became a family moment. He loved her, as he always had, and she was as beautiful now as she always had been. It was Transfiguration in our human understanding - to see someone as he/she truly is. The daughter saw her mother as her father's beautiful wife. On Saturday, 6th August, we celebrate the disciples seeing Jesus of Nazareth as the Son of God - "Transfiguration".