

SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, Yr B

“GOD ALONE SATISFIES THE DESIRES OF THE HUMAN HEART”

In the Liturgy of the Word today we witness the description of two meals, one from the second Book of Kings, the other from the 6th chapter of St John’s Gospel. Here we see an example of typology: an event of the O.T., the feeding of 100 people with twenty barley loaves, prefigures the miracle described by St John in the N.T., the feeding of a great multitude with five barley loaves and two fish.

Note: St John mentions that **‘Jesus went up on the mountain.’** In the ancient world, the mountains were seen as places of encounter between humanity and God. The mountain represents the aspiration of the human spirit upward and the condescension of the divine spirit downward.

Note, also, that **‘the Jewish feast of Passover was near.’** St John’s words have Eucharistic overtones. It is the Eucharist itself which is not only an encounter with God, but it is the Eucharist which satisfies the aspirations of the human heart.

Those who had gathered were hungry. Their hearts were yearning for what Jesus had to offer. From the five barley loaves and two fish, everyone in that crowd was able to eat as much as he needed, and yet there was still plenty left over: 12 baskets of fragments.

Today's Responsorial Psalm helps us to understand the Gospel:

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

'[Lord], the eyes of all look hopefully to you, (Ps. 145)

and you give them their food in due season;

you open your hand and satisfy the desire of every human thing.'

The readings today remind us that God alone satisfies the longings of the human heart. In your quiet time today, ask yourself:

- What is my hunger? What are my deepest desires? What do I yearn for, search for? What are my legitimate needs?
- What type of void, or emptiness, do I experience? Is it loneliness, lack of self-worth, lack of fulfillment, a want for true intimacy?
- How am I trying to satisfy my longings? Do I search for God, who alone can satisfy my longings? Do I ask God for help in my struggles, in my brokenness and emptiness? Or do I try to find consolation in material goods, in food, in unhealthy relationships, in ways that bring me further unhappiness?

St Augustine rightly said: 'You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in you.'

'God put a longing in our hearts that was intended to lead us back to Him. Only His unconditional acceptance, approval, and affirmation can fill the empty places in our hearts, the deepest thirst of our souls. Until God's love and acceptance is enough, nothing else will be.'ⁱ

ⁱ <http://proverbs31.org/devotions/devo/letting-god-fill-my-empty-places-2/>