

29th July 2018 (17th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B)

2 Kings 4:42-44; Psalm 144(145):10-11,15-18; Ephesians 4:1-6; John 6:1-15.

They ate as much as was wanted.

This Sunday and in the coming two weeks, in our parish we will be talking about how we can grow in our faith, how we live out our faith and how we can maintain our faith into the future. Our faith in one God – Father, Son and Spirit – is what brings us together as a community of faith, a People of God, a Body of Christ!

The story from the prophet Elisha in the first reading, foreshadows the gospel story of Jesus' feeding of a large crowd of people. The crowds gather around Jesus not because they understand his message, but because they are witnessing the signs and miracles he performs. The gospel story distinguishes between the twelve apostles, the larger group of disciples and a far larger crowd of people; each group comes to Jesus with its own understanding and needs. Jesus' concern is how to 'feed' all those who follow him.

There are two types of feedings that happen in today's gospel story. Firstly Jesus sits down, a position that indicates he is teaching, and feeds his disciples with the word. Then he moves on to satisfy their need for physical food. In today's gospel reading there are a number of comments that link Jesus with Moses. Both climb up the hillside; the reference to the feast of the Passover is a reference to the exodus from Egypt; like Jesus, Moses gives his people God's word in the commandments; and Moses also provides the people with food, the manna.

Jesus feeds those who follow him and even though initially there did not seem to be enough food, everyone has their fill and there is food left over. In the desert the Jews were only allowed to pick enough manna for one day and if they picked up more than they needed, it rotted and had to be thrown away. The food Jesus gives his disciples is abundant and lasts forever; the disciples are instructed to collect the scraps so that nothing is wasted. The twelve baskets represent the fullness of what was required.

Each Sunday we gather as a community because we are in need of food. We come from different walks of life and with a diversity of needs. In our community of faith we all are nourished. We listen to God's word proclaimed for us and try to understand its relevance for us each day. The bounty of God's word means that we can each eat as much as we want and even though we listen to the same word, we digest it to feed our individual needs.

We gather as one People of God, one Body of Christ and we need to respect that we come with different understandings and varying needs. The one baptism and one faith that brings us together leads us to respect each other and to walk together. As we approach to the altar to eat and drink the body and blood of Jesus, we become one body, one community.

The faith we live is not a static faith, but a faith that needs continuous nourishment and help to grow and mature. We need to be open to grow because 'a faith that does not trouble us is a troubled faith, and a faith that does not make us grow is a faith that needs to grow.' (Pope Francis 1 Feb 2018)

Our Sunday gathering is an important moment in our faith journey. I ask you to consider how you can all continue contribute your gifts and your time to make this a welcoming experience of faith for us all and for those who visit us. We also need to ask ourselves: how does our faith lead us to reach out to others in the community and around us?

Fr Mario