

ctkAlive! Scripture Study
17th Sunday in Ordinary Time
2021—B Cycle



Multiplication of Loaves and Fish
Image found at [A Christian Pilgrimage](#)

Opening Prayer

(edited for use here)

The Bread of Life

Lord Jesus,
you are the bread of life,
the manna that sustains me
in the desert of my daily life.
Without you, I hunger for righteousness
but will forever be found wanting.
Sustain me, Lord, and keep me
in your grace through the vessel of
your most holy body and blood.
Amen.

Source: [Catholic Digest](#) (online), July 15, 2021

Scripture Readings

II Kings 4: 42-44 “They shall eat and there shall be some left over.”

Psalms 145: 10-11, 15-18 “The Lord is near to all who call upon Him.”

Ephesians 4: 1-6 “Live in a manner worthy of the call you have received.”

John 6: 1-15 “Jesus said to Philip. ‘Where can we buy enough food for them to eat?’”

A Reading from the Second Book of Kings (4: 42-44)

“A man came from Baal-shalishah bringing bread and wheat to Elisha, the man of God. These were from the first part of the harvest, twenty loaves of barley and wheat. Elisha told him, ‘Give the loaves to these men that they may eat.’”

"Elisha's servant said to him, 'How am I to divide these loaves among one hundred men?'"

"Elisha insisted, 'Give them to the men that they may eat, for Yahweh says: They shall eat and have some left over.'"

"So the man set it before them; and they ate . . . and had some left, as Yahweh had said."

Personal Reflection

The period of the kings is the *third* stage in Israel's history. It follows the period of the Patriarchs (beginning with Abraham ca. 1750 B.C.) and the Exodus (the story of Moses ca. 1250 B.C.). Originally, the Book of Kings formed *one book*, containing the authors' reflections on Jewish history. The second Book of Kings looks at the progressive decline of the two kingdoms, Israel to the North and Judah to the South.

According to this week's Old Testament story, Elisha, son of a wealthy land-owner, became the attendant and disciple of the great prophet Elijah. After Elijah, Elisha took up his mentor's prophetic ministry. In Chapter 4, we learn of a multiplication of loaves (similar to that of Jesus).

— *How surprised am I to learn that Jesus wasn't the first to feed many with just a little bread? Did I know about this event, or am I "hearing" for the first time today?*

If I grew up in a middle or lower income family, let me recall times when my parents (especially my mom) seemed to "multiply" the family's food to accommodate unexpected visitors.

— *What memories come to mind? Did I recognize the miracle happening at the time? Or do I remember it only through hindsight?*

Responsorial Psalm 145 (10-11, 15-18)

Praise of God's grandeur

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

All your works will give you thanks;
all your saints, O Yahweh, will praise you.
They will tell of the glory of your kingdom;
and speak of your power.

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

All creatures look to you
to be fed in due season;
with open hand, you satisfy the living,
according to their needs.

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

Righteous is Yahweh in all his ways,
his mercy shows in all his deeds.
He is near those who call on him,
who call trustfully upon his name.
*The hand of the Lord feeds us;
he answers all our needs.*

Personal Reflection

In this post-exilic Psalm, the poet—and we today—reflect on all that God does for us. We remember that this is what God has always done. Through no merit of our own, we inherit an unending stream of divine love. The central place of the ‘reign of God’ unites this psalm with the core preaching of Jesus that the Kingdom of God must continue to grow in us and in our society.

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

— *When have I ever thought/said, “I earned the money to buy this food. I went to the market and bought it. I prepared it and will clean up the mess afterwards? So, tell me then, what role God play in it?” What is my true feeling about this today?*

— *When did I last consciously reflect on the fact that every time I sit down to a meal I am sharing a gift from God? How will I make this a conscious awareness in the future?*

A Reading from St. Paul’s Second Letter to the Ephesians (4: 1-6)

“I, the prisoner of Christ, invite you, to live the vocation you have received. Be humble, kind, patient, and bear with one another in love. Make every effort to keep, among you, the unity of spirit, through bonds of peace. Let there be one body, and one Spirit, just as one hope is the goal of your calling by God. One Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God, the Father of all, who is above all, and works through all, and is in all.”

Personal Reflection

In this “prison letter,” Paul returns to an important problem for new converts. How to incorporate their former lives and mores into their new faith in Jesus which they learned from Paul? Their Christian mentor offers advice about incorporating their many personal gifts into the new, communal way of life they have chosen.

The community experienced gifts of the Spirit, but not everyone possessed the same spiritual gifts. Paul assures them this is okay, as long as they maintain their *collective unity*. The apostle’s primary message is that they must see their multiple personal gifts as existing within an overall context of UNITY, namely, the building up of the *one* body of Christ, what we now call the “mystical” the Body of Christ.

“I, the prisoner of Christ, invite you to live the vocation you have received.”

— *What is my primary vocation in life now? What other vocations have I received and lived over the course of my life?*

- *What challenges do I face in living my current God-given vocation to the fullest?*
- *Which aspect of my current vocation gives me the greatest joy and satisfaction?*

Proclamation from the Gospel according to John (6: 1-15)

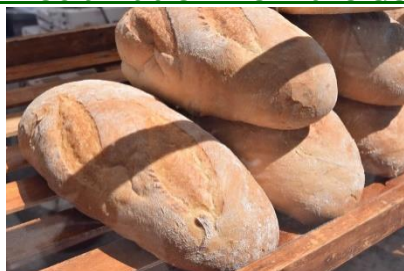


Photo courtesy of [Tom Nora](#) on [unsplash](#)

“Jesus went to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, near Tiberias, and large crowds followed him, because of the miraculous signs they saw, when he healed the sick. So he went up into the hills and sat down there with his disciples. Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was at hand. Then lifting up his eyes, Jesus saw the crowds that were coming to him, and said to Philip, ‘Where shall we buy bread so that these people may eat?’ He said this to test Philip, for he himself knew what

he was going to do.

“Philip answered him, ‘Two hundred silver coins would not buy enough bread for each of them to have a piece.’

“Then one of Jesus’ disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, said, ‘There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish; but what good are these for so many?’

“Jesus said, ‘Make the people sit down.’

“There was plenty of grass there, so the people, about five thousand men, sat down. Jesus then took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed them to those who were seated. He did the same with the fish and gave them as much as they wanted. And when they had eaten enough, he told his disciples, ‘Gather up the pieces left over, that nothing may be lost.’



Photo courtesy of [Gregor Moser](#) on [unsplash](#)

“So they gathered them up and filled twelve baskets with bread, that is, with pieces of the five barley loaves left over by those who had eaten.

“When the people saw the miracle which Jesus had performed, they said, ‘This is really the Prophet, the one who is to come into the world.’

“Jesus realized that they would come and take him by force to make him king; so he fled to the hills by himself.”

Personal Reflection

Here’s a trivia question: Which one among all the miracle stories appears in all four Gospels? Answer: The multiplication of loaves (and even occurs twice in Mark and Matthew). Why do all the evangelists include this miracle? The reason might be that the gospel writers saw in this miracle a foretelling of (1) the Last Supper and (2) all future Christian communities’ celebration of Eucharist.

John the Evangelist used this miracle to launch his major Bread of Life discourse (all of chapter 6). This discourse derives its name from Jesus’ claim that he himself is the Bread of Life, and his food forever sustains those who believe in him.

This miracle also reflects the Jewish belief in a God who always provides for his people. Take special note of the fact that Jesus did not let the disciples stand by and watch. He made them participate, first in Andrew's finding the few loaves and fish and second in the apostles' massive distribution to the assembled crowds.

Here's another message drawn from this amazing event. By the power of God, bread shared in solidarity with others always multiplies. God never abandons those who share from their poverty to nourish others.

— *Thinking of "hunger" in the broadest terms, how do I share what I have with the hungry at home, among friends, and with strangers?*

— *How am I helping to satisfy the deeper, spiritual hunger and thirst that haunts people today?*

For Inspirational Viewing/Listening

Video:

What do you make of this multiplication of [loaves and fishes story](#)?

Do you believe what the young woman's story? If not, why do you doubt her? (3 min.)

Music:

[Psalm 23: The Lord is My Shepherd](#) sung by Bryn Terfel and the Mormon Tabernacle Choir

[Andrea Bocelli](#) sings [Panis Angelicus](#)

The Week Ahead

Journaling Prompts

— *Based on this weekend's Scripture readings, what does the Risen Christ ask me to do TODAY regarding . . .*

(1) the quality of the love I bring to my personal relationships . . . and

(2) my life as an emissary of Christ, committed to bringing God's love to the people with whom I interact in person and on social media?

Who this week needs to hear from me some expression of love?

Who needs to receive from me a moment of laughter and personal concern?

Why do I hesitate?

Take some time to write about your experience and feelings about events occurring in your life today and what you see happening in the world.

Preview of Next Week's Scriptures

18th Sunday of Ordinary Time

Exodus 16: 2-4, 12-15 "The Lord said to Moses: 'I will rain down bread from heaven for you.'"

Psalm 78: 3-4, 23-25, 54 “Yahweh opened the skies above and rained manna upon them for food.”

Ephesians 4: 17, 20-24 “Put away the old self of your former way of life.”

John 6: 24-35 “Do not work for food that perishes but for the food that endures for eternal life.”

Closing Prayer

(edited for use here)

Prayer to Jesus the Christ, Bread of Life

Bread of Life, you feed me through both word and sacrament.

The bread I share is a remembrance of your presence with me.

Strengthen me for service, that the seeds I sow
in fertile places might grow and flourish.

Let the food I share with others nourish and revive us.

Let the words I share in my daily walk glorify your name.

Bread of Life, you feed me through the word of Scripture

and the sacraments, that I might in turn feed others who hunger.

At all times, blessed be your name!

Amen.

Source:

Prayer by [John Birch](#), found on [Faith and Worship](#)

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Questions?

Send any questions or comments you might have to algarrotto@comcast.net

Gender usage in writing: We are conscious of gender references to God in the Scripture texts. Often, attempts to rewrite these passages result in awkward sentence structures. We have left the biblical translations as they are but do our best to be inclusive in all other parts of the reflection.

The Sunday readings are from [Christian Community Bible: Catholic Pastoral Edition](#)

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Follow this link to my spiritual novel, [Bishop Myriel: In His Own Words](#).

Coming soon!! ***Inspector Javert: At the Gates of Hell***

(a novel exploring “what happens next?” after we die)