

# Homily for the 18<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time

August 1-2, 2020

Readings: Isaiah 55:1-3; Romans 8: 35, 37-39; Matthew 14: 13-21

Preacher: Deni Mack

“All you who are thirsty, come to the water. You who have no money, come receive grain and eat...drink wine and milk.” I imagine the children of Yemen and Syria feasting at our family table with their cousins. Also those we help through our parish Mercy Fund, taste Isaiah’s heavenly banquet. And those we feed this week as we sponsor 5 homeless families through RAIHN. That’s Rochester Area Interfaith Hospitality Network.

Due to the pandemic we’re not permitted to host our honored guests as we usually do at Assumption with luscious home cooked dinners served in our beautiful parish living room. Our gift cards from Aldi’s provide food but the love shared at dinner together feeds the spirit and the soul. We miss that togetherness.

Still we bring God’s food to hungry people when our parishioners deliver for Perinton Food Shelf. And a team from Resurrection prepares Sunday dinners for people in need. Building relationships and sharing food are great ways of living faith! Every morsel of food lovingly prepared is a blessing. God’s compassion guides our service and transforms distress.

Before the pandemic, more than 37 million people in the United States struggled with hunger; that number is doubling as the virus spreads. We don’t want to wallow in fear of a future beyond COVID-19 or a future laden with lingering virus. With God’s help we feed our future. The safety of all depends on the actions of all. Some advocate for health care for all and for living wages for home health aides so they can feed their families. It is outrageous that some essential workers are not paid a living wage! Such injustices feed our fervor to make things better.

We hear good news of God’s assurances in the letter to the Romans. God will conquer anguish, distress, peril. God will conquer famine through Jesus who loves us.

Paul’s encouragement to the Romans may be the most assuring words ever written. When our anguish drives us to pray, our resilience, our ability to get up and share some food is God’s Spirit responding through us. When we bring our fears to God, our Spirit lifts. When we’re compassionate with an anguished, hungry or fearful sister our compassion is God’s doing.

God’s Word keeps on feeding us to feed one another: In today’s gospel we see Jesus in a worse spot than a pandemic; he just found out King Herod murdered John the Baptist. Jesus, grieving his cousin’s horrific beheading, wanted time alone but the crowd followed. His heart was moved with pity and he cured their sick.

When Jesus' disciples asked him to send the hungry crowd away to find food Jesus said, "*give them some food yourselves.*" They brought Jesus 5 loaves and 2 fish. Jesus gave thanks, blessed the bread, broke the loaves and gave them to his disciples to share.

How might Jesus respond to hunger today when rent is due, food prices rise, layoffs continue and health care is difficult to access? I trust he'd say, we've plenty of food; *What we need is distribution.*

Imagine your self in this gospel story. Who do you see in the crowd? What are their needs? I see Jennifer, a house cleaner at a nursing home, I see her husband disabled with congestive heart failure, and their children struggling with school work before the pandemic and more so now. Her faith community helps with food, supplies and assurance as she coaxes her children with teachers and counselors. I see Catherine who's brother died and husband is in hospital. Catherine is also fed by her faith community. She says they really are a community, not just a crowd.

Who are you feeling compassionate towards these COVID days? For me, it's people of color on the front lines in health care, our food supply chain and sanitation workers who are ill with COVID—at three times the rate of white people. So, I'm asking my African American friends something I never asked before: "Do you feel safe?" Their responses are troubling. They remind me of a verse in 1 Corinthians: "when one member suffers all the members suffer with it..."

We pray with Jesus in this story of the multiplication of the loaves and fishes as he gives thanks and blesses the food, breaks and shares the bread—the core of our Eucharistic prayer.

Thank *you* for being bread for one another. Sacraments of God's presence, we assure one another.