

20-5-2021

17th Ordinary Sunday - 25 July 2021

Gerard Moore

Follow this and additional works at: <https://researchonline.nd.edu.au/pastoral-liturgy>



Part of the [Catholic Studies Commons](#), and the [Liturgy and Worship Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Moore, Gerard. "17th Ordinary Sunday - 25 July 2021." *Pastoral Liturgy* 51, no. 3 (2021): 1-7. <https://researchonline.nd.edu.au/pastoral-liturgy/vol51/iss3/16>

This Liturgical Resource is brought to you by ResearchOnline@ND. It has been accepted for inclusion in Pastoral Liturgy by an authorized administrator of ResearchOnline@ND. For more information, please contact researchonline@nd.edu.au.





25 July 2021

Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Reflection by Gerard Moore

Introduction

Our Gospel from chapter 6 in John begins the ‘bread of life’ discourse. The series of texts begins with the miracles of the loaves and fishes. The Gospel of John puts forward the signs that Jesus has done and references them back to the miracle of that great and wild prophet Elisha. The miracles are a sign that God is at work, but the sign is designed to promote our own self emptying and alignment with what God is seeking. Wonder at the mighty works of God should prompt self-reflection towards the challenge of faith. This matches the approach of Elisha who never sought to profit from the works of God, but closely aligned his desires to the heart and intention of the Lord.

Collect of the Sunday

There is a deep sense of sacramentality underpinning this prayer. God, our protector, ruler and guide gives good things and helps us to use them so that their good is realised in us. However, there is also a more particular sense derived from the history of the prayer. The petition to hold onto the good things that pass originated from a prayer of Pope Vigilius (d.555), prayed in Rome during the year 537 as the besieged city anticipated the defeat of the Arian invader Wigites and the consequent lifting of the siege due to a fresh injection of troops on behalf of the Romans. The pope was anxious that in the rush of victory the population should remain mindful of the things that were both good and also a foretaste of life in the divine city. In particular then, the good things that pass are the liturgy, the fasts, and the divine mandates. To partake in them on earth is to have an experience of the unchanging joy of eternal life. Another feature of the prayer, so typical of the collects, is the way in which God is understood as intimate to the life of the community, offering continuous protection, guidance and leadership. Even in the midst of calamity, God is seen as close, merciful and abundant.

Penitential Act

Use one of the *Roman Missal* texts or this optional litany form:

Lord Jesus, you are our everlasting food. Lord, have mercy.
You invite us into the banquet of love. Christ, have mercy.
You are the Bread of Life. Lord, have mercy.

First Reading

2 Kings 4:42-44

The prophet Elisha shows the power of the word of God, through which so many people are fed and there is enough left over.

Second Reading

Ephesians 4:1-6

Paul reminds his hearers of the Christian way of life, and its emphasis on unity of spirit.

Gospel Reading

John 6:1-15

Jesus works a sign in which the vast crowd was fed, yet those who came far to be with him ultimately misunderstand his mission

Reflection

Our complex Gospel is introduced with a story of the prophet Elisha. This narrative is one from a series of miraculous healings, feedings, purifications and miracles in general. These events all have a subtext of Elisha's dependence upon God, his refusal to bow to kings, generals or officials, and his reliance of the word of God generously bestowed upon him. In the midst of a drought, the prophet does not keep the offerings brought him from afar but wants them shared. The smallish offering becomes a meal for a hundred people, all through the word of God. For Elisha it is God's word that is the source of power. Elisha is the one who can hear this word in the midst of all that is going on.

John presents us with a complex set of ideas, many of which recur across the Gospel as a whole. Most importantly, Jesus is pictured as in control. This motif will emerge most strongly in John's passion narrative, but it is here now. In the story Jesus always knows what he is going to do and takes the initiative to feed the gathering crowd. The people read him accurately as a prophet, and indeed as the Prophet, while the miracle is told with parallels to the Elisha miracle. Also, correctly, the people recognise the sign as one only a prophet could bring about. They are following him because of the signs he has already performed with the healings that have taken place. Yet the people misunderstand. The signs and the miraculous feeding only work to invert the situation. Instead of these leading the people to follow God's will, the signs incite the people to have Jesus follow their will. He wants to lead them into the reign of God, but they want him to be their king. Ultimately Jesus retreats to solitude.

This background allows the story of the multiplication of the loaves and fishes to come to the fore. The crowd is very large, denoted by the number 5000. The seating on the grass, or rather reclining as if on a meal, has a reference back to the Psalms

– lying on green pastures (Ps 23). The psalm is further taken up in that Jesus feeds the people with abundant generosity – there is nothing they shall want. The actual narrative juxtaposes the feeding of the crowd, the story of Moses feeding the people in the desert with Manna, the Elisha reading, and the eucharistic practices of the early Christian communities (the first hearers of this story). The Passover reference emphasises the connection with the miracle of the manna, as both come together in Israelite theology. Unlike the manna which cannot be stored, the bread that Jesus provides can be picked and kept. The number of wicker baskets, twelve, is a sign of completeness. The disciples of Jesus are left in charge of the abundance. They will carry the faith forward.

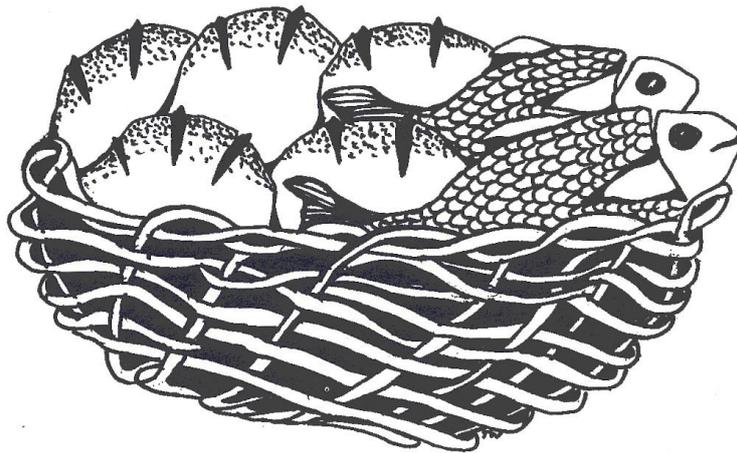
The text alludes to the eucharistic practices of the communities for which it is written. The Elisha and Passover references allow for the Christian community to depth the meaning of the blessed bread. The formula of ‘taking’ and ‘giving thanks’ is reminiscent of very early eucharistic references in the Didache, parts of which are from the first century. These eucharistic indicators allow an introduction to the Johannine ‘Bread of Life’ discourse which is soon to follow.

The passage provides the preacher with plenty of material but a question of where to land. At heart is the somewhat disturbing sense that no matter how attractive Jesus is to the people and his disciples, his signs are misunderstood. Perhaps here is the ongoing challenge for us. The miracles are a sign that God is at work, but the sign is designed to promote our own self emptying and alignment with what God is seeking. Wonder at the mighty works of God should prompt self-reflection towards the challenge of faith. This matches the approach of Elisha who never sought to profit from the works of God, but closely aligned his desires to the heart and intention of the Lord.

There is also the power and sheer humanity of the eucharist. It is a sharing of food. It is an action of community. It is a gathering point of many, many diverse people. It is a place of abundance. It is a place of teaching. It is a meal in the tradition of all meals. It is an action of the Church. Most critically it centres around a thanksgiving blessing in the name of Jesus and a transformation of the bread so that our spiritual nourishment is complete. The people who want to make Jesus into a king do not understand that they have just been fed and united, and as such an anticipation of the reign of God.

Our reading from Paul is a continuation of extracts from the Letter to the Ephesians. It offers something of the marks of Christian living: humility, gentleness, patience, bearing with one another in love, unity of the spirit and peace. To live these is to live in a manner worthy of baptism, and to witness fittingly to Christ. There is a contemporary problem with this way of goodness. The reading has a sense of parallel with the beatitudes. Perhaps here is our cue to the application of these today. None of these virtues are meant to leave us as pushovers! While they provide good guides for communal living, in our current context they can be re-applied to seek that the faithful are passive in the face of poor conduct, and open to the charge

of bringing disunity when bullying and harassment and the like are named and brought into the open. The Jewish sense of peace that Paul is referencing has a presumption of right behaviour, a fair marketplace for trading, and justice. As more and more episodes of sexual abuse, bullying, inappropriate workplace culture, gender discrimination and other products of our current conduct are uncovered, the Christian response is institutional humility, gentleness and patience for those who are damaged, justice for victims and hope for the community at large, and an overall drive for unity worthy of the Spirit. The Letter to the Ephesians is not offering a soft option, but rather the reflections of a prisoner unjustly in chains and facing death, the reflections of one who is carrying Christ in their sufferings.



What is this between so many?

Jn 6:9

Prayer of the Faithful

Introduction

The psalmist proclaims that the Lord feeds us and answers all our needs so we have the confidence to present this prayer.

Petitions

We pray for Pope Francis and all the leaders of our Church that they will have confidence in the power of faith to feed the hungry of this world through the work they are privileged to do.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for all those who are members of the Plenary Council. May they deliberate carefully about the needs of the Church in Australia so that the people of God are fed with hope and joy.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for all the leaders of our world that they will behave as St Paul exhorts us to – in selflessness, gentleness and patience.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for those who are involved with the production and distribution of food throughout the world. May they work to ensure that the distribution is fair and just and that there is a preferential option for the poor.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for all families that they may be strengthened by the meals that they share and experience real joy in the company of each other.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for all those in our community who particularly work to help the homeless and the disadvantaged to be fed. May they find joy in the work of Jesus.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

Conclusion

Father, you give us the Bread of Life. Therefore, we know that these needs will be granted through the power of the Spirit and in the name of Jesus Christ, your Son.

Amen.

Music selections by Alessio Loiacono and Chris deSilva

GA

Bread of life. B. Farrell. 199
Christ is made the sure foundation. J. Neale/ H. Purcell. 482
Diverse in culture, nation, race. R. Duck/ T. Tallis. 520
Eat this bread. J. Berthier. 205
For the fruits of this creation. F. Green. 426
Gather your people O Lord. B. Hurd. 530.
Gift of finest wheat. O. Westendorf/ R. Kreutz. 191
Now in this banquet. M. Haugen. 197
O Christ the great foundation. T. Lew/ S. Wesley. 484
One bread, one body. J. Foley SJ. 193
There is one Lord. Taize. 346
We are many parts. M. Haugen. 523

AOV1

Bread of life. B. Farrell. 164
Eat this bread. J. Berthier. 125
Gather your people O Lord. B. Hurd. 71
One bread, one body. J. Foley SJ. 129
Praise, my soul, the king of Heaven. H. Lyte; J. Goss. 78
We are many parts. M. Haugen. 86

AOV2

Table of plenty. D. Schutte. 20
There is one Lord. O. Alstott. 148

AOV4Kids

For the journey. G. Holmes. 128
The table of God. F. O'Brien. 8
We give thanks. T. Watts/ M. O'Brien. 105

CWB

By your priestly power, O risen Lord. James Phillip McAuley. 635
Gift of finest wheat. Omer Westendorf. 685
I am the bread of life. Suzanne Toolan. 718
Shepherd of souls, in love, come, feed us. J. Clifford Evers. 804

CWBII

Sunday by Sunday hymn suggestions
There is one Lord. Jennifer R. O'Brien. 107
Eat this bread, drink this cup. Taizé Community. 484
Gather your people, O Lord. Bob Hurd. 490
I come with joy, a child of God. Brian Wren. 508
Shepherd of souls, in love, come feed us. Omer Westendorf. 596
Gift of finest wheat. Omer Westendorf. 651
Additional selections by Chris deSilva

By your priestly power, O risen Lord. James Phillip McAuley. 462
I am the bread of life. Suzanne Toolan RSM. 509

S&S1

I am the bread of life. John Michael Talbot. 153

S&S2

There will be bread. Sarah Hart. 373

Psalms Selected by Chris deSilva and Angela McCarthy

Psalm 144: *The hand of the Lord feeds us; he answers all our needs.*

Psalm 144: Noel Ancell. CWB 398

Psalm 145 (144): Jenny O'Brien. JOBB pg. 76

The hand of the Lord feeds us: Tony Alonso. LPB pg. 130

Music selections by Michael Mangan

Forever I will sing (FWS based on Ps 145) [Gathering, Gifts, Sending]

One body in Christ (TWB) [Communion]



The hand of God feeds us.