

OUR LADY STAR OF THE SEA, MUMBLES
Reflection for
Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (A), August 2, 2020
(May be used for Home Prayer Service)
Dominican Friars, Swansea

This reflection may be used during the home prayer service. Please see the home prayer service sheet for details.

GOD SATISFIES OUR LONGINGS IN THE EUCHARIST

We have a God who fulfils every promise he makes to us. The Scripture speaks of the power of God and the efficacy of his word (Heb 4:12). Our readings of today speak of the God who invites us to a banquet where he satisfies our inner longings.

It is a lonely place: The Gospel Reading reports that the crowds came to Jesus and Jesus had pity on them and healed their sick. After Jesus' ministry to them, his disciples expressed that human fear of loneliness which we grapple with. They said, "It is a lonely place" (Mt 14:15). On many occasions, we feel lonely in life. We feel that there is no one who cares for us. We feel very vulnerable. This is similar to the life of the Psalmist who laments, "I look beside me and I see, there is no one to help me, no one to protect me, no one cares for me" (142:4).

The day is over: We may also say with the disciples of Jesus, "the day is over". We feel the day is over when we think that all hope is gone, when we feel we have failed in life and when we feel that we have wasted the past years of our lives. Sometimes, we suppose it is too late to make any meaning of our lives. This is the way we humans think and evaluate our lives. However, when we honour the invitation of God at the banquet of life, the divine speaks in us and the human finds life once again.

We need not go away: The disciples of Jesus suggested that the people be sent away to feed themselves, but Jesus had other plans which they did not know about. He insisted that the people remain with him. He asks us to stay with him at the table of his banquet where he promises to feed us and satisfy our longings for him. When we stay with Jesus, we no longer feel lonely or dejected because he gives meaning to our lives. With Jesus, we no longer feel empty because he fills us with his goodness. With Jesus, we do not have to go away sad, because he is the source of our joy.

Jesus relieves our pain: For someone who has been through a long journey, a seat will be a perfect gift. Sitting will make the traveller feel

relieved and relaxed. Jesus made the people, who had been through a long journey, to sit on the grass, in touch with the earth where they came from. Jesus, through whom we received our natural lives, knows the difficulties we have been through in life. Thus, he relieves our pain and soothes our sorrows.

Our help comes from the Lord: For the disciples of Jesus, it was impossible to feed so many people with just five loaves of bread and two fish. On the contrary, in the First Reading, we are assured that God can satisfy our deepest human yearnings. When Christ took the bread and the fish, he looked up to heaven where our help comes from (Ps 121:1-2) and multiplied the bread and fish. With these, he fed the people to their hearts' content.

This miracle of the loaves prefigures the Eucharist which Christ gave to the Church at the Last Supper (Mt 26: 26-28). Thus, the Church refers to the Eucharist as the Paschal Banquet where we receive Christ who has offered himself to us as food (CCC 1382). In Christ, we have a Saviour who looks after his sheep and feeds them. He will not allow his sheep to go hungry. To keep us nourished, he feeds us with his word and the Eucharist, the bread of heaven. When Christ looked up heaven, miracle happened. When we also entrust our lives to God in prayer, we experience a life-changing encounter with the divine. We pray that nothing will prevent us from honouring the invitation of the Lord (Second Reading, Rm 8:35.37-39).

The Mission of the Church: After Jesus had multiplied the loaves, he gave it to his disciples to distribute to the people. Pope Emeritus, Benedict XVI writes that, in this action, Jesus taught and prepared his disciples for their future apostolic mission. This mission was to nourish all people with the Word of life and the sacraments (Angelus, Sunday, 31 July 2011). May the Church continue to be faithful to the divine mission of nourishing God's children. May we find nourishment and satisfaction in the Lord through the ministry of the Church. Amen.