

Monday Week 18 of Ordinary Time

Numbers 11:4-15, Mt. 14:13-21

Both readings today have food at their centre. In the first reading, the Israelites grumble at Moses because of the monotony of the basic manna, and Moses, frustrated, tells God that it is His responsibility as they are effectively His children. In the Gospel we have Matthew's account of the feeding of the 5,000; Jesus wants to be alone and pray because of the news of His cousin's death, but He is followed by a large crowd who are hungry, not just physically, but spiritually.

What can we learn from this? Food of course, is a basic necessity of life and the plethora of different food programmes on the TV channels are an indication that we like variety and want to be able to do more than just "eat". We want our food to be varied and tasty. How about our spiritual life then? Are we content with the same routine? Mass on Sundays, some moments of prayer and reflection during the week and grace before and after meals? May be our prayer life needs spicing up? Maybe, like the crowds that followed Jesus, we need to go after Him and seek more from Him? And they were rewarded. Not only were they fed physically, but spiritually too. The fact that this event is recorded in all four Gospels is indicative of its importance. Jesus wants us to follow Him, and He wants to give us food that feeds our souls.

At the end of September, our parish will be having a weekend retreat, and this might be the boost we need. The people around Jesus couldn't get enough of Him; they wanted more! Perhaps we should follow their example and prioritise that weekend to give our spiritual tase buds some refreshment. In the end, "soul-food" is more fulfilling as it feeds us for Eternal Life, the point made by Jesus in Sunday's Gospel (Jn. 6:24-35).