

8th Sunday after Trinity

2 Kings 4: 42-44, Ps 145: 10-19, Ephesians 3: 14-21, John 6: 1-21

Jesus said to Philip “Where are we to buy bread for these people to eat?” Jn 6: 5



*Loch side picnics are all in vogue at the moment. A recent visit to Stroan Loch proved to be an almost biblical feeding for Josh and Isaac (our dogs) when they came across a campsite pan of Sausage, Chorizo and Potatoes left by some kind comatose campers! To them it was a miraculous feeding. One to be relished at 6 ‘o’ clock in the morning!

*Our gospel this morning is about a miraculous feeding (though some modern commentators may not see this as a miraculous event). To understand the significance of this passage, from John’s Gospel, concerning the five loaves and two fish we need to refresh our biblical memories:

| JOHN’S GOSPEL PARALLELS | |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------|
| THE SAMARITAN WOMEN AT THE WELL | FEEDING WITH GOD’S BREAD |
| • 4:6 Jesus sat | • 6:3 Jesus sat |
| • 4:8 buy food | • 6:5b buy bread |
| • 4:11 “where from” water | • 6:5b “where from” bread |
| • 4:18 5 husbands | • 6:5b five loaves |
| • 4:19 prophet | • 6:14b prophet |
| • 4:31 eat | • 6:5b eat |
| • 4: 20 mountain | • 6:3 mountain |
| • 4: 25 messiah | • 6: 15 king |

- *Jn 4: 6-25 It is the story of the Samaritan woman at the well. These stories parallel each other: Jesus sits, there is a

need to buy food/bread, 5 husbands 5 loaves (representing 5 books of Torah or the Pentateuch), Jesus is called a prophet, they eat, it takes place on a mountain, Jesus is proclaimed a messiah/a king.

- There are OT similarities: Jesus crosses the sea /Moses crosses the Red Sea to the Promised Land; it takes place on a mountain where the Jews traditionally met with God; it is near Passover.
- The Passover recalls the flight from Egypt, yet, the Jews do not want to keep the Passover in Jerusalem where it would be traditionally held – is there an element of dissatisfaction with the old regime?
- Ex 20:20 Moses said “ *Do not be afraid; for God has come to test you.*” Jesus tests Philip in this morning’s gospel Jesus said to Philip “ *Where are we to buy bread for these people to eat?*” Jn 6: 5.

Life is pretty difficult at the moment and life, as I seem to be forever saying is changing – it is certainly very different from the earlier ages I have lived through. So are we being tested, as Jesus appears to be testing Philip, and God tested the Israelites in Exodus?

The Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople (Istanbul) said at a conference in Halki 2018:

“We know what needs to be done and we know how it must be done. Yet, despite the information at our disposal, unfortunately very little is done. It is a long journey from the head to the heart, and it is an even longer journey from the heart to the hands.”

In this morning’s gospel Jesus is testing Philip in Faith and Economics! There would appear to be a similarity with you and I today and the

way we live our lives as people of Faith in society. The Ecumenical Patriarch's words were concerning Faith today, and the issue of global warming. He also said:

“The material world is good; it is both the vehicle of God's grace to us and what we have to offer back in praise, worship, and thanks. To pollute the stream is to pollute the chalice; to inject battery acid into one's own veins is not a good thing to do”

Andrew's attempts to help Philip out when he says *“There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish. But what are they among so many people?”*^{v9} The boy's supplies are truly bountiful but what are they, as Andrew says, among so many people? Could this be seen as parallel with us in the West? At the same time the offering is plenty, yet farcically small for the crowd that is present. Perhaps, we feel this way with our attempts to make a positive contribution to the world and society at large. The loaves being made of barley emphasize the fact that the boy is not rich – in fact he comes from a poor background. His offering to Jesus though is sufficient not only for his needs, but those of the crowd too. For we read, at v13, *“the fragments of the five barley loaves, left by those who had eaten, filled twelve baskets.*

Jesus' actions at v11 are really important: **“Then Jesus took the loaves, and when He had given thanks, *He distributed them to those who were seated; so also the fish, as much as they wanted.”* In doing this Jesus would have reminded the Jews of the time Elisha fed hundreds of people miraculously with barley loaves¹. Jesus feeds 5000 people though!

¹ 2Kings 4: 42

This is not just a feeding. It is a meal! A Eucharistic meal! Similar to the one we will all participate in shortly. How should we adapt?

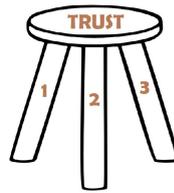
A parish priest once encouraged his people to undertake a few very basic, very minimal practices suitable for ordinary Christians: keep something of a fast on Wednesdays and Fridays in accord with universal ancient practice, attend Vespers each Saturday evening, Matins and receive communion on Sunday morning at the eucharistic Divine Liturgy, establish a regular practice of sacramental confession according the guidance of the spiritual director of one's choice (not even requiring that it be with the parish priest). The immediate response of one of the parishioners was, "But Father, if we do these things it will completely change our whole lives!" He replied: Precisely!

*Elder Aimilianos of SimonoPetra advises us to practice restraint and spiritual vigilance.

"Let the common aim be the meeting of a need. ... For everything which does not serve a pressing need becomes an obstacle to those who would be saved; everything, that is which does not contribute to the salvation of the soul or the life of the body... The most dreadful enemy created in the post-industrial culture, the culture of information and the image, is cunning distraction."²

One approach to the ecological concerns of the current fifty years has been in terms of stewardship. Don't waste resources or damage the intricate, life-supporting inter-related environmental systems that allow and foster the flourishing of our life.

² Authentic Seal p. 350-351



*Our personal offerings may seem small and of no value but taken as a whole, when offered to God and those in need, they can be life changing!

- Take.
- Give Thanks.
- Distribute.

*Trust God and Expected the unexpected!

In questioning Philip, Jesus is showing you and me the better Way to live! Amen.