

Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

† Sunday, 25 July 2021



In England & Wales – World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly
Cycle of Prayer: Those who suffer persecution and denial of human rights
Keynote: God's People fed abundantly in word and sacrament

Second Book of Kings 4: 42-44

This event takes place while there is a famine in the country of Gilgal. A man brings *'the bread from the first fruits, twenty barley loaves and fresh grain in the ear'* and offers it to the prophet Elisha – the man of God. Elisha commands: *'Give it to the people to eat,'* but the servant questions this, *'How can I serve this to a hundred men?'* Elisha repeats his command that it be fed to the people saying, *'for the Lord says this: "They will eat and have some left over."* Thus the 'man of God' is able to reveal the generosity of the Lord God who gives freely and with such abundance. The passage in the gospel today describes Jesus feeding another crowd of people. The message deepens our understanding of the meaning of our relationship with God – the one who generously and freely provides, and offers us riches and blessings in such great abundance.

Responsorial Psalm 144 (145): 10-11, 15-18 – A song of praise to the eternal God

Letter of Paul to the Ephesians 4: 1-6

In an earlier part of this letter, Paul set out his vision of the unity of all peoples under the reign of Christ. Now the apostle focuses on the need for unity within the Christian community itself. *'I implore you,'* he writes *'to lead a life worthy of your vocation.'* By reason of our baptism the vocation of each of us is to be the living body of Christ, to be in communion with one another – and in our common unity to show forth Christ – indeed to be the living Christ in the world today. Paul would have us *'bear with one another charitably, in complete selflessness, gentleness and patience... to preserve the unity of the Spirit by the peace that binds you together.'* The apostle reminds us that we have been called to share the one and same hope, and he says, *'There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God who is Father of all.'*

Gospel according to John 6: 1-15

Many of those who were present sitting on the grass when Jesus fed the multitude will have been familiar with the account of the feeding by prophet Elisha related in the first reading today. But the feeding by Jesus today is even more significant. We can get some idea of the magnitude of this multiplication of the loaves when we understand the statement from Philip, *'Two hundred denarii would only buy enough to give them a small piece each.'* For this amount of money might equate at that time to eight months wages! Jesus, is the one who earlier in the gospel provides 'living water', now Jesus is the one giving the 'living bread', and so abundantly, that *'they filled twelve hampers from the scraps left over from the meal of five barley loaves'*. This miracle event is meant, I believe, to authenticate for the crowd, and for us too, the realisation that Jesus is the one sent from God. The evangelist underlines this point saying, *'The people, seeing this sign that Jesus had given, said, "This really is the prophet who is to come into the world."*