

Homily of Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time Year A, 2020

Isaiah 55:1-3; Psalm 145:8-9,15-18; Romans 8:35, 37-39; Matthew 14:13-21

The first reading is God's message of consolation to the Jewish exiles in Babylon. At that time, the exiles were in despair and desolation. Many of them no longer trusted that God was going to take care of them. Through Prophet Isaiah, God called upon them: "All you who are thirsty, come to the water! You who have no money, come, receive grain and eat; come without paying and without cost, drink wine and milk! Why spend your money for what is not bread; your wages for what does not satisfy? ... Come to me heedfully, listen, that you may have life. I will renew with you everlasting covenant, the benefits assured to David."

This message is very relevant to us during these difficult and trying times. In one way or another, we are all hungry, thirsty, and sick. The pandemic has humbled us to realize that various things we spent our time and energy on, and many things we held as indispensable no longer matter. Life is all that matters. Think of those things that we could not do without in the past. Now, we are surviving without them. We are all gasping for life. God, the origin and source of life, invites us, "Come to me heedfully, listen, that you may have life."

We have been praying that these difficult and trying times do not weaken our faith or make us lose our faith in God. St. Paul encourages us that anguish, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, or sword should not separate us from the love of Christ. St. Paul says, "No, in all these things we conquer overwhelmingly through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor present things, nor future things, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." No matter what comes our way, "we conquer overwhelmingly" if we are close to God through Jesus Christ.

In the Gospel, Jesus withdrew himself to a deserted place to mourn the death of his cousin, John the Baptist. The vast crowd discovered where he went and followed him. Jesus was moved with pity and cured the sick among them, and miraculously fed the hungry crowd with five loaves and two fish. "They were satisfied and they picked up fragments left over – twelve wicker baskets full." Jesus multiplies for those who trust him and come to him.

We read in the Gospel, "When it was evening, the disciples approached him and said, 'This is a deserted place and it is already late; dismiss the crowds so that they can go to the villages and buy food for themselves.' Jesus said to them, 'There is no need for them to go away; give them some food yourselves.'" In this miracle, Jesus fulfills the words of Scripture:

- Psalm 94:14, "For the Lord will not forsake his people, nor abandon his inheritance."
- Psalm 103:13, "As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord pities those who fear him."
- Matthew 11:28, "Come to me, all of you who work hard and who carry heavy burdens and I will refresh you."
- John 6:35, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me will never hunger, and whoever believes in me will never thirst."
- John 6:37, "All that the Father gives to me come to me, and whoever comes to me, I shall not turn away."

Hebrews 13:6 says, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever." His saving grace and miraculous deeds remain abundant in our time. Let us, therefore, accept God's invitation in our moments of exile; in our moments of desert; in our moments of thirst and hunger; in our moments of sickness; in our moments of heavy burden and in our moments of despair and desolation; he will not let us down. He will give us our life back. Let nothing separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

Fr. Martin Eke. MSP