

GOSPEL

Luke 9:11-17

Jesus made the crowds welcome and talked to them about the kingdom of God; and he cured those who were in need of healing.

It was late afternoon when the Twelve came to him and said, 'Send the people away, and they can go to the villages and farms round about to find lodging and food; for we are in a lonely place here.' He replied, 'Give them something to eat yourselves.' But they said, 'We have no more than five loaves and two fish, unless we are to go ourselves and buy food for all these people.' For there were about five thousand men. But he said to his disciples, 'Get them to sit down in parties of about fifty.' They did so and made them all sit down. Then he took the five loaves and the two fish, raised his eyes to heaven, and said the blessing over them; then he broke them and handed them to his disciples to distribute among the crowd. They all ate as much as they wanted, and when the scraps remaining were collected they filled twelve baskets.

HOMILY OF POPE LEO XIV

22 June 2025, Excerpt

Dear brothers and sisters, it is wonderful to be in the presence of Jesus. The Gospel passage we just heard attests to this; it recounts how the crowds spent long hours listening to him speak about the Kingdom of God and seeing him heal the sick (cf. Lk 9:11). Jesus' compassion for the suffering shows us the loving closeness of God, who comes into our world to save us. Where God reigns, we are set free from all evil. Yet even for those who accept the good news brought by Jesus, the hour of trial comes. In that deserted place, where the crowds were listening to the Master, evening fell and there was nothing to eat (cf. v. 12). The hunger of the people and the setting of the sun speak to us of a limit that looms over the world and every creature: the day ends, as does the life of every human being. At that hour of need and of gathering shadows, Jesus remains present in our midst.

Precisely when the day is ending and hunger sets in, as the Apostles themselves ask him to dismiss the crowds, Christ surprises us with his mercy. He feels compassion for those who are hungry and he invites his disciples to provide for them. Hunger is not foreign to the preaching of the Kingdom and

the message of salvation. On the contrary, it speaks to us of our relationship with God. At the same time, five loaves and two fish seem completely inadequate to feed the people. The disciples' calculations, apparently so reasonable, reveal their lack of faith. For where the Lord is present, we find all that we need to give strength and meaning to our lives.

Jesus responds to the appeal of hunger with the sign of sharing: he *raises* his eyes, *recites* the blessing, *breaks* the bread, and *feeds* all present (cf. v. 16). The Lord's actions are not some complicated magical rite; they simply show his gratitude to the Father, his filial prayer and the fraternal communion sustained by the Holy Spirit. Jesus multiplies the loaves and the fish by sharing what is available. As a result, there is enough for everyone. In fact, more than enough. After all had eaten their fill, twelve baskets-full were gathered up (cf. v. 17).

That is how Jesus satisfies the hunger of the crowd: he does what God does, and he teaches us to do the same. Today, in place of the crowds mentioned in the Gospel, entire peoples are suffering more as a result of the greed of others than from their own hunger. In stark contrast to the dire poverty of many, the amassing of wealth by a few is the sign of an arrogant indifference that produces pain and injustice. Rather than sharing, it squanders the fruits of the earth and human labour. Especially in this Jubilee Year, the Lord's example is a yardstick that should guide our actions and our service: we are called to share our bread, to multiply hope and to proclaim the coming of God's Kingdom.

In saving the crowds from hunger, Jesus proclaims that he will save everyone from death. That is the mystery of faith, which we celebrate in the sacrament of the Eucharist. For just as hunger is a sign of our radical needs in this life, so breaking bread is a sign of God's gift of salvation.

Dear friends, Christ is God's answer to our human hunger, because his Body is the bread of eternal life: Take this and eat of it, all of you! Jesus' invitation reflects our daily experience: in order to remain alive, we need to nourish ourselves with life, drawing it from plants and animals. Yet eating something dead reminds us that we too, no matter how much we eat, will one day die. On the other hand, when

we partake of Jesus, the living and true Bread, we live for him. By offering himself completely, the crucified and risen Lord delivers himself into our hands, and we realize that we were made to partake of God. Our hungry nature bears the mark of a need that is satisfied by the grace of the Eucharist. As Saint Augustine writes, Christ is truly “panis qui reficit, et non deficit; panis qui sumi potest, consumi non potest” (Serm. 130, 2): he is bread that restores and does not run short; bread that can be eaten but not exhausted. The Eucharist, in fact, is the true, real, and substantial presence of the Saviour (cf. Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1413), who transforms bread into himself in order to transform us into himself. Living and life-giving, the Corpus Domini makes us, the Church herself, the Body of the Lord.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

What stood out to you from the Gospel or Reflection/Homily?



Head: Thinking beyond literal food, what do you think people are truly hungry for today?



Heart: Where or for what do you most "hunger" in your life? (eg relationship, rest, health)



Hands: "Where God reigns, we are set free from all evil". What does this look like practically to you? How might we "live for him"?

PRAYER

Spend some time in prayer with one another:

1. Conscious of what has just been shared, members briefly name/ describe their prayer needs.
2. Intentionally call on the Holy Spirit to be present (e.g. "Come Holy Spirit, please be present as we pray")
3. Offer prayers of thanks and praise to God.
4. Pray for each others' prayer needs. Where appropriate, you may like to encourage the group to place a hand on the shoulder of the individual that you are currently praying for.
5. Conclude your prayer time with another prayer of praise, perhaps praying the 'Glory Be'.