

The Seventh Sunday after Trinity -July 18, 2021

“And his disciples answered him, How can any one satisfy these men with bread here in the wilderness?”

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost- Amen!

The Collect that we have just prayed together for this Seventh Sunday after Trinity is surely one of the most beautiful and moving in our dear Prayerbook! It is the call of the Christian soul to be remoulded in the image of our Blessed Lord Jesus Christ, and a plea from the heart to be instructed and nourished in the new life in Christ!

LORD of all power and might, who art the author and giver of all good things: Graft in our hearts the love of thy Name, increase in us true religion, nourish us with all goodness, and of thy great mercy keep us in the same; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

There is here a sort of spiritual “wish list” for all those who are serious about their Christian walk! We ask the Lord to graft us, nourish us, increase in us and keep us.

I don't suppose that there anyone of us that doesn't want to have the type of Christian experience that this soul-stirring prayer calls us to, and yet, if we were honest with ourselves, we would have to admit that there is much in our souls and in our lives that stands in opposition to the life of blessedness and certainty, that the Lord Jesus call us to, and that is reflected in these powerful words of prayer!

But dear friends, there is always hope, there is the ever present promise of Christ to Bless and Sanctify our desire for Him and His Kingdom, and there is the assurance that His grace is sufficient for each and everyone of us to find our true life in Him.

This morning's Gospel, which recounts the Lord's feeding of the four thousand, involves much more for us than simply our Lord's provision for a hungry and tired group of people that had gathered together to hear His Blessed Word! It is in addition, a revelation of the nature of Almighty God to bring to life and fruition the poor offerings of our broken and lonely hearts. It is a Gospel passage that drives away fear, and that opens to us the eternal generosity of our God!

The situation that is described invites us to put ourselves in the place of the Lord's Disciples, and allow Him to teach us a key lesson for our Spiritual lives. It is a lesson that is so very important for the life of our souls, and yet so very hard to put into practise-it is the simple and yet profound lesson of trust, and willing obedience, even in the midst of what seems so often to be impossible, and beyond the reach of the Divine Love.

When our Blessed Lord questioned His Disciples about what they had to provide for the outward needs of the multitude, their answer was not very promising-seven loaves and a few small fish! No wonder they reacted to the situation with a sense of fear and hopelessness. But in spite of what would seem to be an impossible situation, the Lord Jesus takes the bread and fish, blesses them, passes them to the Disciples, and the multitude is fed to the full, and there are even seven baskets left over! Holy Scripture doesn't tell us how this was accomplished, and we would not understand anyway, but none the less it really did happen! From

something so small, the Glory of God was revealed! Here something that seemed hopeless and poor, was changed by the Eternal Word of God into rich provision for the needs of His children!

So often we can hear or read the words of Holy Scripture and wonder how they could ever relate to us in the here and now of our lives. The words are wonderful, and we love to hear and read them, but what do they mean for us today? Can we really trust that the Lord Jesus cares for us as He cared for the men and women that lived so long ago? The answer dear friends is a resounding YES! He really does care, He really is concerned about us, He really does stand ready to run to us in our time of need and bestow His blessing upon us! His ears are always open to our prayers, and He longs to embrace us and draw us to Himself in love!

Our Lord's Disciples asked "How can anyone satisfy these men with bread here in the wilderness", and so we ask ourselves how is it possible that He can feed us when we have so very little inside of us for Him to bless. Sometimes our hearts seem so small, sometimes we are burdened with our own sense of unworthiness, sometimes we find ourselves at a point in our lives when we feel that we are beyond hope, and beyond love!

When we find ourselves painfully aware of the poverty of our souls, and we experience the darkness and futility of hopelessness and despair, we must NOT give up-we must Not think that all is lost or that the Blessed Jesus is unconcerned with the desperate condition of our hearts! Here is when we must be like the Disciples in today's Gospel and simply give to the Lord what we have-our fear, our sins, our longing to be better, to be more given to the things of God! The wonderful thing is that no matter how little we may have to offer Him, He will lay His Blessed Hands upon the meager offerings of our hearts, and make them, if we are willing, into a beautiful garden of spiritual goods and graces. Here is what we are all really looking for and longing for-to know that we can trust Him with all that we have and all that we are! We don't have to impress Him with our spiritual accomplishments, rather we need to be constantly asking Him to feed us with that spiritual bread that is the Lord Himself!

Here then is the great secret of the Spiritual Life-that it is a life of self-offering in humility and love, together with a childlike reliance upon the Lord of Life to fill us with the heavenly food of His gracious presence. Imagine what this means for all of us dear friends- that our poverty and darkness will be replaced with His light and beauty as we give ourselves to Him moment by moment, trusting that no matter how difficult the road is, He will be there with us-guiding and cherishing us as we walk-correcting us when we stray from His Blessed Side, and protecting us from the evil designs of Satan, the destroyer of souls.

For the Christian believer, all that we have and are flows from the gracious and merciful Heart of Christ! We have nothing to boast about in His presence-rather ours must be an attitude of humble and reverent thanksgiving for all of the mercies that have been showered upon us! No matter how poor we may feel at times, no matter how discouraged and confused we might be, still the Lord Jesus will come to us in love and pity as we offer to Him our poor and longing hearts.

St Paul reminds us in the Epistle to the Romans that we heard read today, that when the Lord touches the heart, when we are brought from death to life by faith in His Precious Blood shed for our redemption, then a new life must take root in us. We have passed from the death of sin to eternal life in Christ, and our lives must demonstrate that blessed hope in Christ that we carry deep within our hearts. We are to live as new creatures-as those who have new hearts, new attitudes, and a new and living hope.

So today is a day to come before the Blessed Jesus just as we are-seeking a renewed sense of His Sacred Presence with us-longing for Him to become ever dearer to us and offering to Him ourselves, our souls, and bodies as a living sacrifice- a living sacrifice of love and mercy to Him who has loved us so freely and so completely! May the sacred words of today`s Collect be truly ours as we seek to love Him today and throughout Eternity!

Glory Be to God for All Things! AMEN