

Go Forth...

A SERVICE OF U.S. CATHOLIC MISSION ASSOCIATION

MISSIONARY COMMENTARY

THE KINGDOM IS HERE!



SUNDAY READINGS:

Isaiah 55:1-3

Psalms 145: 8-9, 15-18

Romans 8:35, 37-39

Matthew 14:13-21

MISSIONARY COMMENTARY

During my time in Brazil I learned so much about Liberation Theology especially in reading the Gospels. Many of the Latin American theologians were alive then and publishing challenging books as they reflected on the Bible through the lens of liberation, oppression and community action. At a national

conference on Biblical interpretation, I met Leonardo Boff and had an enlightening conversation with him. I also met Ivone Gebara at a conference for women religious. Both influenced my own reflection of many Biblical passages for which I am eternally grateful.

The passage about the multiplication of the loaves and fishes is one in which I came to understand how Jesus truly formed his disciples at any moment. Jesus was moved with pity as he looked upon the crowds. Was he disappointed because they followed him seeking only food and cures for their loved ones? Had he hoped that they would be seeking the truth and the meaning of his teachings? The disciples then inform him that the people are hungry but how can they feed them? At least the disciples perceived the real need of food, and as usual, turn to Jesus to resolve the problem.

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How did Jesus respond? "...give them some food yourselves." Jesus challenges them to take the action of giving food to the people instead of relying on him to solve the problem. Jesus blesses the sparse food and then turns to the crowd. It is impossible to imagine that no one brought at least a small piece of bread knowing that Jesus was outside the city. So the disciples walked among the people with the baskets; some take out a piece, others break their own bread and place it in the basket. At the end there are 12 baskets full! The disciples could say with the people, "We shared our bread and there was enough!"

What a formative moment that probably made Jesus very happy. In community we share whatever is needed and there will always be enough. Jesus resolved the problem by showing the disciples that they could solve the problem, too. What a beautiful lesson the disciples learned! Invite the community, the parishioners, friends, neighbors and family to place on the "table" what they have, little or much, and all will benefit.

As we worked with the base communities in Brazil, we would frequently say that organizing, sharing and living the Gospel values are the ways that we "rehearse" for heaven, because Jesus had said that "the Kingdom is already in your midst!" May our rehearsals be frequent and constant.

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NOTES ON THE SUNDAY READINGS:

First Reading - Isaiah 55:1-3: Who could resist this invitation that God gives us through the prophet Isaiah? God always takes the initiative to renew the covenant with us back as He did with the Israelites. God's people were unfaithful many times, but God offered water, food, wine and milk, to sustain the health of them. They are also symbols of what sustains a relationship with God. May we hear God's call to return to a loving God.

Responsorial Psalm - Psalm 145: 8-9, 15-18: The psalmist is deeply grateful for and recognizes the generosity of God who sustains life. Not only does God provide food for all, but God satisfies the desire of every heart. God knows what we need before we articulate it, but it is in the asking that we realize how much we need God's love.

Second Reading - Romans 8:28-30: St. Paul's letter continues with the theme that passes through today's readings and takes it to a deeper level. There is nothing in this world nor in the heavenly realm that can separate us from God's love. The words flow so easily from Paul's pen, but in reality our limitations, doubts and fears can and often do separate from the love of God. The return to God may not be easy. It requires humility, honesty and the capacity to beg for pardon. When that is done, the rest is easy because it comes from God. Our merciful and loving God will always forgive us with arms open.

Gospel - Matthew 9:36-10:8: This Gospel shows a very important quality of the person of Jesus: "his heart was moved with pity for them and he cured their sick." Jesus is the Son of God, but he is also a human person with all the sentiments of a human being. He saw the vast crowd and could feel the difficulties of his people. He knew they were sick and hungry. This knowledge inspired him to react as he did. I ask myself, do I feel the needs of those near me? And of the world? What can I do to heal and to satisfy the hunger?

Notes and Commentary by Sr. Nancy Schramm, OSF. Sr. Nancy is a past-president of the USCMA and currently serves in a small rural parish. She also serves her religious community on various committees. She is a spiritual director and translates for other groups in Portuguese.

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