

SUNDAY PLUS

Feed your heart

Enough for everybody

by Catherine Pepinster

For people living in the ancient world in a land surrounded by desert and with little water, food and drink were even more precious than they are to us. There was



always a fear that survival would become impossible. So a lack of food would be a source of anxiety. Food and water dominate scripture and our need of it is often a metaphor of our need for God and of his generosity to us.

In the reading from Kings we read how the Lord ensures there was enough for everybody when it was shared out. It was a forerunner of the miracle that is one of the most famous in the New Testament: the feeding of the five thousand. Yet again it is a situation where Jesus attracts a huge crowd. They have heard of his reputation

and have followed this teacher, wanting to know more about him. But this crowd might get out of control. The people are hungry. We know how agitated they can become without food. Despite there being just five loaves and two fish, there is enough to go round. It is a remarkable moment. People who might have fought one another for a scrap of bread share it between them. Jesus has brought them together. In this way, the people on the hillside are forerunners of those who gather together for the Eucharist. There is enough spiritual food for us all. Jesus himself is the nourishment we need – the peace, as the letter to the Ephesians says, that binds us together.

Catherine Pepinster, a former Editor of *The Tablet*, is a regular contributor to Redemptorist Publications' *Living Word* and *Weekday Living Word*.

Hungry for wholeness

by Canon Paul Douthwaite

In today's Gospel miracle, the multiplication of loaves and fishes grabs our attention as the finale to Jesus' teaching of the multitude. The question could be asked as to why so many were following Jesus – was it because they wanted to be fed loaves and fishes? The boy who brought with him his packed lunch of five loaves and two fish remind us that at least he was looking for something else. He was attracted by Jesus' message and wanted to be fed spiritually by his words.

Potentially, the familiar miracle overshadows Jesus' teaching. It detracts from the hunger the people had, enabling them to receive his words and become

whole. The young boy stands as a vivid reminder in the Gospel of one who came to receive Jesus' words and, exemplified what he had received in his willingness to share. In so doing he became Christ to his brothers and sisters.

Canon Paul Douthwaite is the National Catholic Chaplain for Prisons and HMPPS Roman Catholic Faith Adviser.

“Miracles happen. But prayer is needed! Prayer that is courageous, struggling and persevering, not prayer that is a mere formality.”

Pope Francis

Hungry for love

by Gráinne Treanor

The Gospel of the loaves and fishes stands out as one of the most memorable stories from my childhood. Back then, I probably thought Jesus was a magician to have fed so many with so little and still have had leftovers! Yet despite my literal understanding, I had a sense that this story meant something more. It was about sharing – an important concept in the life of most children – but also about fairness and human need: everyone's hunger was satisfied through human cooperation in God's miracle. It introduced me to what I understood as God's desire for justice and equality. Later, another meaning enriched those earlier ones. It was that hunger can be more than physical, and that the greatest human hunger is possibly

the hunger for love. Humanity today is called to cooperate with God to share God's justice and love in a world that hungers for it.

Gráinne Treanor is a mother of three and professional editor/proofreader who works from her home in the west of Ireland.

Jesus, you gave people food for their bodies but also fed their souls. Fill my heart to overflowing so that I might share your love with others. Amen. 

Today:
2 Kings 4:42-44
Ephesians 4:1-6
John 6:1-15

Monday:
Exodus 32:15-24, 30-34
Matthew 13:31-35

Tuesday:
Exodus 33:7-11; 34:5-9, 28
Matthew 13:36-43

Wednesday:
Exodus 34:29-35
Matthew 13:44-46

Thursday:
1 John 4:7-16
John 11:19-27
or Luke 10:38-42

Friday:
Leviticus 23:1, 4-11,
15-16, 27, 34-37
Matthew 13:54-58

Saturday:
Leviticus 25:1, 8-17
Matthew 14:1-12

Next Sunday:
Exodus 16:2-4, 12-15
Ephesians 4:17, 20-24
John 6:24-35