

## Fr Paul's Homily

### 2nd August 2009

### Eighteenth Sunday of the Year (B)

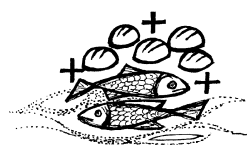
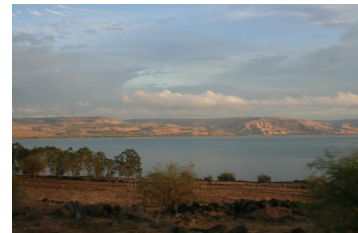
*"Why did we not die at the Lord's hand in the land of Egypt?"*

With immense patience Moses, Aaron and God himself responded to the fickle and self-obsessed community. What short memories they had? While they had plenty to eat in Egypt they were actually slaves. They wanted deliverance and freedom. They wanted God to show them that he was on their side.

And he did. With extraordinary power and amazing signs the Israelites were brought out of Egypt, despite the power and force of Pharaoh. It was true, times were hard for them and they were travelling as itinerants through an inhospitable and desert wilderness and death was a distinct possibility from starvation. We can sympathise with their plight and with their fear but somehow in their complaining and grumbling they were forgetting God's presence and providence and his fidelity to them in the past.

It is a danger that threatens us all. Surrounded by the goodness of God and constant reminders of it – creation itself reveals God's love and presence to us – we easily forget his love for us and his purpose. How often do we have debates about abortion, euthanasia and more recently, assisted suicide? In all these things there is a tendency to forget the one who gives life and who promises that there is far more to life than we can immediately experience with the senses. There must be more consideration of the fact that life is a gift from God and that every second of it is about the preparation and the journey towards the fulfillment of heaven.

The same forgetfulness is clear when Jesus meets the crowd at Capernaum after they had crossed the Lake of Galilee to find him. Jesus points out that they came not because they were looking for him but because they had all the bread they wanted to eat at the multiplication of the five barley loaves and two fish. Somehow they had lost sight of the one who provided the bread in the first place. Greed and the delight of eating enough to satisfy hunger had blinded them to the greater reality of Jesus and his power in their lives.



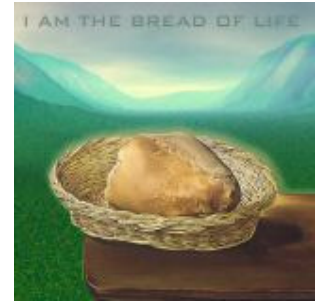
The feeding of the five thousand was given to them that they might understand who Jesus is and enter a fuller relationship with him. Jesus exhorts them to use their energies to provide, not food that cannot last, but food that endures to eternal life; the food and source of life that God is offering them directly and which is Jesus himself.

During a time of recession when lots of people are losing their incomes through redundancy and loss of work, Jesus' teaching that we should not work for food that cannot last may seem hard and insensitive. Of course we need to work for food and the basic materials that are vital for life and well-being. And the fact that these do not last means that we have to work all the harder when there is a large family to feed.

Of course we need to provide food for our families and as we do it we must not forget who it is that gives us the food. Satisfaction of our desires and the pleasure that it brings must not

become the end of the story and the final outcome. The bread in the Gospel story that the people wanted was the kind that satisfied physical hunger which is fine. But, as Jesus points out, they were not connecting with the fact that Jesus was offering them something much greater.

The pleasure of satisfaction, the many desires that make up our experience whether it is for food, love or knowledge are given us to open us to Jesus who gives us true life. The satisfaction we enjoy in this life is short-lived and temporary. As the bread of life Jesus is offering us a share in his divine life which is the permanent and everlasting satisfaction which brings fulfilment of ourselves as human beings.



Let us always give thanks for the gifts and the food which bring us delight and pleasure. The gratitude and the prayer of thanksgiving lead us to see beyond the material and physical into the complete joy and life which is ours in the beauty of the divine Spirit which is God's gift to us.

Let us always avoid the temptation to greed which deceives us into thinking that the more we have the happier we shall be. As we receive enough for each day we are lead into the deeper and more beautiful truth of God's life within us.

Let us ensure that life with its work and struggle, its delight and pleasure may always be lived each day in time which is shaped, begun and ended by time spent in prayer and the presence of Christ.

It is all summed up in the words of St. Paul "Your mind must be renewed by a spiritual revolution so that you can put on the new self that has been created in God's way, in the goodness and holiness of the truth."