

**EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME YEAR A**  
**THEME: GOD'S LOVE AND DIVINE PROVIDENCE**

The central message for today's readings is the divine providence of a loving and merciful God who generously shares his riches with us, giving us his Son Jesus as our spiritual food, preparing us for the heavenly banquet, and challenging us to share our blessings with others.

After announcing the return of God's chosen people to their homeland from Babylonian captivity, the prophet Isaiah, in today's first reading, concludes his prophecies with God's invitation to the eschatological banquet. God's gracious invitation in the first reading is echoed by the Psalmist who asks the people to respond by praising and blessing God.

In the second reading, Paul argues that since God loves us, "nothing can come between us and the love of God made visible in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Jesus, in our Gospel reading, demonstrates God's love and divine providence by miraculously feeding a multitude of people in a remote, desolate village called Bethsaida Julius, where the River Jordan flows into the north end of the sea of Galilee. Jesus acts out of his great compassion for the crowds.

First he challenges his disciples to give what they have - five loaves and two fish. Then he performs the four-fold action that prefigures the Eucharist: He takes, blesses, breaks and gives the bread and fish to the crowd, making of them a community of the Lord's banquet. Just as God supplies the needs of all living beings, so Jesus also heals the sick and feeds the hungry.

My brothers and sister in Christ, the Liturgy of the Word for today's Mass is reminding us that God really cares about his people and that there is enough and more than enough for everybody.

We all share responsibility for the fact that some people are still undernourished. It is necessary at this time to arouse a sense of responsibility in individuals, especially among those more blessed with material goods. It is too easy to blame God, too easy to blame the governments, too easy to see poverty, hunger and lack of jobs as other people's problems. They are also our problems.

That is the meaning of the Eucharist we celebrate here today. In other words, as Christians we have to commit ourselves to share and to work with God in communicating his love and compassion to all. God is a caring father, but he wants our cooperation. That is what the early Christians did, generously sharing what they had with the needy.

They were convinced that everything they needed to experience a fulfilling life was already there, in the gifts and talents of the people around them. People of our time have to be encouraged to share their gifts and talents, even when they think they have nothing to offer. Whatever we offer through Jesus will have a life giving effect in those who receive it.

Our Gospel passage today shows us two attitudes: that of Philip and that of Andrew. Philip said, in effect: "The situation is hopeless; nothing can be done." But Andrew's attitude was: "I will see what I can do, and I will trust Jesus to do the rest." Like Andrew and the little boy, let us give what we have to God. For it is when we give what we have to God and ask him to bless it that miracles happen.