

## Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle A

### Background on the Gospel Reading

**First Reading** - *Isaiah 55:1-3*

The Lord will renew his covenant with the descendents of David.

**Responsorial Psalm** - *Psalms 145:8-9, 15-18*

The Lord provides for his people.

**Second Reading** - *Romans 8:35, 37-39*

Nothing can separate us from the love of God.

**Gospel Reading** - *Matthew 14:13-21*

**Jesus feeds the crowd with five loaves and two fish.**



### Background on the Gospel Reading

Today we jump ahead in our reading of *Matthew's Gospel to Chapter 14*.

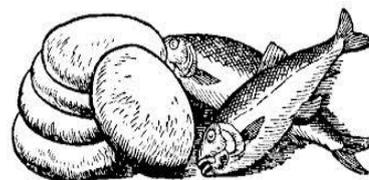
Last week we heard Jesus conclude his discourse with the crowds about the *Kingdom of Heaven*.

In Matthew's narrative, **Jesus then leaves the crowds and returns to Nazareth**, where he is rejected. Matthew then recounts the story of John the Baptist's arrest and execution at the hands of Herod. Today's Gospel reading begins at this point.

Upon hearing **the news of the death of John the Baptist**, Jesus seeks to withdraw, but the crowds follow him. **Jesus reaches out to them in compassion and heals the sick.**

At the end of a long day, the disciples encourage Jesus to send the crowds away so that they might find provisions for themselves.

Jesus again **responds with compassion for the crowd**. Jesus tells his disciples to provide food for the crowd. The disciples reply with a report of the **meagreness of their own provisions—five loaves and two fish**. The result is the very familiar miracle of the multiplication of the loaves and fish. **Matthew's Gospel tells us that 5,000 men were fed, and this number does not even include the women and children.**



**Jesus' blessing brought abundance from the meagre provisions of the disciples.**

In this action, **Jesus offers us a sign of the Kingdom of Heaven that he has been teaching about in the parables.**

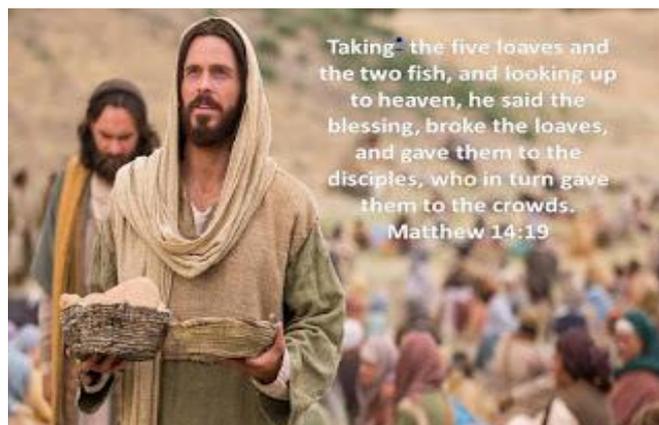
A feast results from the smallest of portions—remember the mustard seed and the yeast. In this miracle we witness an example for Christian life and ministry.

**Even the smallest of offerings can produce abundant results when placed in the service of the Kingdom of Heaven.**

We find the story of Jesus' multiplication of the loaves and the fish in **each of the four Gospels.**

In the Gospels of Mark and Matthew, Jesus performs this same miracle on two separate occasions.

The story of this miracle is an **anticipation of the Eucharist in which we are fed by the abundant grace of God. The importance of the Eucharist has been a defining element of Christian life from the very beginning.**



Taking the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, he said the blessing, broke the loaves, and gave them to the disciples, who in turn gave them to the crowds.  
Matthew 14:19

**Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle A**  
**Making the Connection (Grades 1, 2, and 3)**  
**Gospel Reading - Matthew 14:13-21**  
**Jesus feeds the crowd with five loaves and two fish.**

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Young children are still learning the virtue of sharing. In Jesus' miracle of the multiplication of the loaves and fish, we find an example of how abundantly God blesses acts of generosity and compassion.

**Materials Needed**

- None

**Preparation for Sunday Scripture Readings**

1. ***Today we are going to talk about something that I know you all have already learned much about, sharing.***

***What does it mean to share?*** (Accept all reasonable answers.)

***Think about a time when someone shared something with you.***

Ask a few volunteers to share their story with the group.

***How did you feel when your friend shared with you?*** (Accept all reasonable answers.)

***Now think about a time when you shared something with someone else.*** Ask a few volunteers to share their story with the group.

***How did you feel when you shared with another person? Is it easy to share what we have with others?*** (Accept all reasonable answers.)

2. Say: ***In today's Gospel we hear about a time when Jesus told his disciples to share their food with a large crowd of people. The disciples weren't sure that they wanted to share, and they told Jesus that they didn't have much food to share—only a little bread and a few fish. Has anyone ever told you to share what you had with another person? Did you think you had enough to share? How did you feel about being told to share? Keep these questions in mind as we listen to this story.***



3. Read aloud today's Gospel, Matthew 14:13-21.
4. ***How do you think the disciples felt when Jesus asked them to share their food with the crowd?*** (Accept all reasonable answers.)  
***What did Jesus tell the disciples to do with the food that they had?*** (He told them to bring it to him so that he could bless it.)  
***What happened when the disciples gave the food to the people?*** (There was more than enough for everyone. They collected 12 baskets of leftover food, even after more than 5,000 people had been fed.)
5. ***Jesus performed a miracle that day, feeding thousands of people with just a small amount of food. Jesus' disciples never dreamed that so many people could be fed if they shared the little food that they had. Jesus showed his disciples, and us, how important it is to share what we have with others by performing this miracle.***
6. Conclude in prayer together. Encourage children to pray that God will help them to always share what they have with others. Pray the Lord's Prayer or the

**Prayer of Saint Francis.**

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace:  
where there is hatred, let me sow love;  
where there is injury, pardon;  
where there is doubt, faith;  
where there is despair, hope;  
where there is darkness, light;  
where there is sadness, joy.

O divine Master, grant that I may not so much  
seek  
to be consoled as to console,  
to be understood as to understand,  
to be loved as to love.  
For it is in giving that we receive,  
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,  
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.  
Amen.

## Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle A Making the Connection (Grades 4, 5, and 6)

### Gospel Reading : *Matthew 14:13-21*

Jesus feeds the crowd with five loaves and two fish.

Older children are familiar with the procedures for sharing their things with others: divide what you have to produce equal portions. In today's Gospel, Jesus does something much more than this. He produces a feast of plenty from apparent scarcity. This is the kind of miracle God will work with our acts of generosity and compassion.

#### Materials Needed

- A small uncut loaf of bread
- Plastic knife
- Napkins

#### Preparation for Sunday Scripture Readings

1. Show the group the loaf of bread. Ask the group for some ideas about how this loaf of bread might be shared with the entire group. Have the group decide upon the best way to share the bread with everyone.
  2. Say: ***You have all learned what it means to share what we have with others. This is very important. God wants us to share our time, talents, and possessions with others. But this is only the first aspect of the kind of sharing that Jesus taught us. Let's listen and reflect upon today's Gospel so that we might understand what God can do with our small acts of generosity.***
  3. Invite a volunteer to read aloud the first part of today's Gospel, Matthew 14:13-17.
  4. ***It was a very large crowd with Jesus that day. How many loaves and fish did the disciples report that they had? (five loaves, two fish) Could that number have been equally divided and shared with the crowd? If so, what would the portions have looked like? (Probably not; the portions would have been extraordinarily small.) Jesus seems to be making a very unreasonable request to his disciples. How do you think they felt? (Accept all reasonable answers.) Let's hear what happens next.***
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5. Invite another volunteer to read aloud the second part of today's Gospel, Matthew 14:18-21.
  6. ***What did Jesus do with the bread and the fish? (He blessed it, broke it, and gave it to the disciples; the disciples distributed the food to the crowd.) Does this sound familiar? When else did Jesus bless food, break it, and give it to the disciples? (at the Last Supper) This reading is about sharing what we have with others, and it is also about the Eucharist. How many people were fed? (more than 5,000) The Gospel tells us that they all ate and were satisfied and there were leftovers—12 baskets full!***
  7. ***Jesus did more than divide what the disciples had to share; he multiplied their small offering of food. God blesses our acts of generosity and makes what seems scarce to be plentiful. This is indeed a miracle.***
  8. Conclude in prayer together, asking God to bless and multiply our small acts of generosity.

Pray together the [Prayer of Saint Francis](#) or today's Psalm, Psalm 145.

**Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle A**  
**Making the Connection (Grades 7, 8, and 9)**  
**Gospel Reading : Matthew 14:13-21**  
Jesus feeds the crowd with five loaves and two fish.

By way of cell phones and the Internet, today's technologically savvy young people emotionally connect with one another by sharing videos, songs, and pictures. The story of the multiplication of loaves and fish illustrates how Jesus shares himself in order to feed us spiritually.

**Preparation for Sunday Scripture Readings**

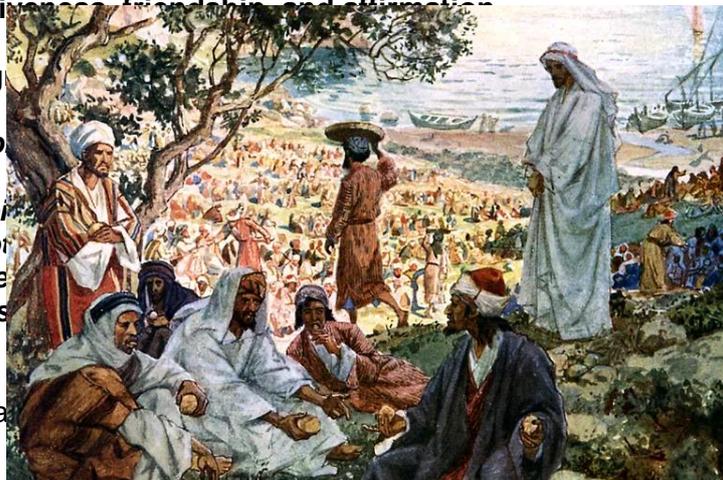
1. Ask the young people what food they would order at this very moment if they had the chance.
2. Invite volunteers to share choices.
3. Explain that the human body needs energy and that there are detectors in our brains keeping track of our energy supplies.
4. Say: ***When energy levels get low, these detectors send out a signal, letting us know by making us hungry that we need to replenish our energy.***
5. Tell the young people that we use the word ***hunger*** to describe human desire for needs other than food.
6. Arrange the young people in groups of three or four. Have them brainstorm a list of spiritual, emotional, and psychological things that humans typically hunger for.

**Examples are compassion, forgiveness, friendship, and affirmation.**

7. After a few minutes, record each group's list.

8. ***Just as our bodies require the proper nourishment for energy, we need the proper spiritual nourishment to meet our emotional needs. In this Sunday's Gospel, we learn about how Jesus feeds our spiritual hunger.***

9. Have volunteers read aloud Matthew 14:13-21.



10. ***What do Jesus' disciples want to do with the hungry crowd?*** (dismiss or send the people away) ***What does Jesus use to feed the great crowd with?*** (five loaves of bread and two fish) ***What does this story teach us about our spiritual hunger?*** (Jesus feeds us.)
11. Say: ***Let's pray that in the days to come, we will turn to Jesus to ask for everything that we need—our daily bread.***
12. Conclude this time together by praying aloud the Lord's Prayer.

## **Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle A Family Connection**

**Gospel Reading : *Matthew 14:13-21***

Jesus feeds the crowd with five loaves and two fish.

In our family life we can sometimes hear echoes of the disciples' excuses: **“Five loaves and two fish are all we have here.”**

Sometimes this echo is heard from children squabbling about the last piece of cake. Sometimes it is heard in our concern about the limits of the family's income or possessions. Sometimes this echo is heard in our complaints about the seemingly endless demands for our time and attention.

Jesus understood these feelings and **taught us to see beyond our limitations**. Jesus modelled for us a compassion that reaches out to others, even when we would rather withdraw into ourselves. ***Jesus taught us that God blesses compassion offered to others with his grace.***

Today's Gospel reminds us that with God there is not only enough, there is an abundance!

Talk together about some of the stresses and demands for time and attention that your family members might feel. Acknowledge that we sometimes have to make difficult choices about how to use our time, talents, and treasure.

**Then read together today's Gospel, Matthew 14:13-21.**

Notice how much ***Jesus cared for the crowds***, healing the sick even though he wanted to withdraw to a quiet place.

Notice how the **disciples responded to Jesus' instruction to feed the crowd**; they noted their limited supply of food. Jesus blessed this limited supply of food, and it was enough to feed the entire crowd, **more than 5,000 people**, and there were leftovers!

Pray together that ***Jesus will grant us compassion like his so that we will offer whatever we have to others with compassion and generosity.***

Pray together today's Psalm, Psalm 145, or the Lord's Prayer.