

The feeding of the five thousand is one of the most familiar accounts of Jesus' miracles. It's the only miracle recorded in all four gospels. Today we've heard Matthew's version. Jesus feeds a multitude of people with a tiny amount of food.

Today's readings are full of images of God feeding his people : in the psalm we read "The eyes of all creatures look to you, and you give them their food in due time; you open wide your hand : grant the desires of all who live : in the first reading Isaiah it says "Come to the water, everyone who thirsts, come and buy corn without money, and at no cost, wine and milk.

As we read these words of scripture, it is impossible for us not be reminded of the places in our world where people are not being fed, deprived of their most basic needs — and so these words should have an effect on us — and make us untiring in our efforts to feed the hungry in whatever way we can — we can do so locally by donating to the food bank, and through CAFOD to help the poor in the third world : Jesus' words to the disciples in the gospel "You give them something to eat, apply to us too, and they apply in the physical, material sense — those people in the gospel were genuinely hungry, and Jesus satisfied that physical need.

But as with so many passages of scripture, we need to look also for the spiritual meaning : "you give them something to eat" is also addressed to the Church at this time ; in the world there is a deep

spiritual hunger which can only be satisfied by Jesus the Bread of Life.

As Jesus fed the hungry multitude by the sea of Galilee, so he has given to his Church the means of feeding the spiritually hungry people of our time.

We are told in the gospel that he took the five loaves and the two fish, raised his eyes to heaven and said the blessing, and breaking the loaves he handed them to the disciples who gave them to the crowds.

The connection with the Mass hardly needs pointing out — the actions are the same — as the priest says in the eucharistic prayer : The day before he suffered, he took bread in his sacred hands, and looking up to heaven, to you his almighty Father, he gave you thanks and praise; then he broke the bread, gave it to his disciples.

We then are being invited to recognise with joy and gratitude that in the Mass, in this Mass and every Mass God is offering to us and to the world food from heaven, food free of charge, food which satisfies our deepest needs, food which gives us the assurance of Christ's overwhelming love; the assurance of his presence with us as we journey through life, food which should remind us of those in need; food which assures us, in the words of St Paul, that no power, no adversity, absolutely nothing, not even death itself can separate us from the love of God made visible to us in Christ Jesus our Lord

Jesus our Saviour invites us to his table to be fed with the bread of Life, as he fed the starving multitudes in the gospel reading. Let us call to mind the times when we have been unworthy of this gift, and ask him to heal us.

Lord Jesus, you raise us to new life.

Lord Jesus, you forgive us our sins.

Lord Jesus, you feed us with your Body and Blood.