

TRINITY 8
Isaiah 55:1-3
Rom 8 35:37-39
Mt 14 :13-21

When verses of Scripture are set to catchy tunes, it is easy to use the words to sing the tune rather than use the tune to reflect on the words. Our first reading is prone to that. Chapters 40-55 of the Book of Isaiah were written to those Jews who were in exile in Babylon after Jerusalem was destroyed in 587 BC. Isaiah is promising them a restoration to their homeland and invites them to share in the free, unmerited blessings that will come with that. This deliverance from exile back to Jerusalem will occur so that both as a nation and as individuals, God's people will be witnesses to a new covenant that God will make with them. God made the old covenant with King David who was the political and military leader of his people as well as shepherd of God's people. In the new covenant it will be the people who are being called to bring the nations of the world to the knowledge of God. The new covenant sealed with the blood of God's suffering Servant is an evangelistic one.

Isaiah invites God's people to join in a meal to celebrate this new beginning. The invitation is open **to** everyone because everyone suffers from hunger and thirst and it is **for** everyone because God asks for nothing in return. However, the idea of trudging through the desert back to Jerusalem wasn't appealing to everyone. Many had settled in Babylon and preferred to stay there. Isaiah throws a bomb at them and says, "Are you really satisfied? You might be materially wealthy, but that doesn't make you spiritually satisfied." Spiritual satisfaction comes from being open and obedient to God's will. Isaiah urges them to trust God again and then they will be satisfied.

Throughout the Old Testament, the absence or presence of food is crucial to God's people, but the real food they needed was that of God's word. The meal that Isaiah invites the people to share is one that looks back to the Passover on the night they left Egypt and how God satisfied them in the wilderness with water from the rock and manna from heaven. It also looks forward to the heavenly banquet when all of God's righteous partake in the feast of God's Kingdom. Some of God's people returned to Jerusalem, but they did not draw the Gentiles into the knowledge of God.

On a hillside in a lonely place, Jesus feeds the hungry with 5 loaves and 2 fish as God had fed his people in the wilderness. Once again, Jesus tells them that what they need is the true bread from heaven, which is God himself. Jesus takes the bread, gives thanks, breaks it and shares it as he does during the last Supper, which was a kind of Passover meal without a lamb, for he himself is the Lamb of God. Out of these actions the Mass has developed, a gathering of God's people which looks back to the Crucifixion of Jesus when God's Passover Lamb offered himself to reconcile God's covenant people to himself and looks forward to the heavenly banquet in the presence of God himself.

Both the meal envisaged by Isaiah and the Catholic mass are interim and incomplete. Our mass provides us with the true bread from heaven, food for our journey to the heavenly banquet. But like the exiles from Babylon, our journey involves being living examples of

God's love in our lives so that others are drawn to the love and knowledge of God. We know that we do not journey alone, we belong to the community of God's people. As St Paul reminds us, neither death, nor life nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The exiles were to rebuild Jerusalem and the Temple and draw others to God. St Francis was told to rebuild God's Church and we too are challenged to renew the Church by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus and the resurrection through which true satisfaction is to be found.

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