

18th Sunday (A)

3rd August 2014

'More than you can eat!' (Palazzola 2014)

Is 55: *come to the water all you who are thirsty, though you have no money, come*

Rom 8: *Nothing can come between us and the love of Christ ...*

Mt 14:13–21: *feeding of the 5000*

Being here at Palazzola, maybe the 'feeding of the 5000' doesn't seem *quite* such a huge miracle after all! I mean, it seems to happen here every day! In fact, I worked out that Palazzola feeds 5000 more-or-less every three weeks! OK, perhaps not in just one evening, like our Lord, and not from only 5 loaves and 2 fish! Even so, the food we enjoy here on the terrace at Palazzola echoes nicely the 'Messianic banquet' — God feeding His people — as Isaiah beautifully described it, there, in the 1st reading: *listen, listen to Me and you will have good things to eat and rich food to enjoy!* It's good to give thanks to God for these blessings.

'The Feeding of the 5000.' It's a very important and significant occasion, and *all four* Gospels relate the event. One of the most striking things is the fact that there is so much left over! 12 baskets of scraps! What can we make of that? Well, if you are in love, you are always likely to

be a bit extravagant, aren't you? Spend a bit too much on the other person, lavish a bit too much of your efforts on them. It is all part of being in love.

God is always extravagant and super-abundant with His gifts. Look at the universe! The very size of the universe, its billions of galaxies, each containing billions of stars. The scale of the universe can hardly be imagined, and we still can't see all of it! Even on our own world, the extravagance of creation, far more than ever God would have needed to create; in its beauty and complexity, an amazing preponderance of fine detail, the work of the greatest mind, and the most fervent lover. Being here at Palazzola, enjoying the wonder of the natural world, the landscape, the weather, the greenery, the wildlife, I think we sense this; maybe it's one of the reasons we keep coming back here. In this place, we're close to the loving Lord of Creation: the Lord who has loved the universe into being.

God's finest creation, of course — the thing on which He has lavished most care and attention, the most complex thing in the universe — is in fact the human brain, the seat of human spirit, the place where God's comes to

dwell intimately with His creation. This is indeed the pinnacle of God's extravagance, love, and wonder.

And when we recognise this sort of extravagance in God's action, is it any wonder that when Jesus comes to feed His people, He is generous to the extreme? He does not grudgingly feed them, with as little as He can get away with, but in such abundance. From two fish and five loaves, to feed the five thousand. For He had such compassion and love for these people who followed Him, that He so wanted to give Himself to them, and to keep them by Him, rather than drive them all off to fend for themselves.

This is all meant also to be a foretaste of Eucharist — the real way in which Jesus continues to feed His people. It is not surprising that when Our Lord wishes to come into our lives most closely, He chooses to come in the form of food, wanting to enter our lives most fully and to sustain us. The Eucharist doesn't look like a lot — any more than the five loaves and two fish looked like much. But it is in fact more than anyone could ever completely consume: it is Jesus continuing to give Himself in

abundance; giving His whole divine self to nourish us and keep us close to Him. The miracle of the Mass is much greater than the miracle on that day with the 5000 fed.

At Palazzola this weekend, let's feel this closeness to the Lord. Whilst we are fed well and in abundance, here, let's remember that "man does not live on bread alone ... but on every word that comes from the mouth of God." The heart of this place is that it's not only a holiday home, a villa for recreation, but it is a sanctuary, a sacred site, a place constructed around the Church. The heart of Palazzola is the Blessed Sacrament, Jesus's abiding presence under the appearance of food, the "Bread of Life," the Eucharist. The heart of our week together, here, then, is the Mass: to come to give thanks for all our life's blessings, the abundance that the Lord lavishes upon humanity, and upon ourselves. And to know that the Lord is always going to feed us when we come to Him: Sunday by Sunday He doesn't tire of feeding His children with the graces of His Cross and Resurrection, so we can live a holy life in Him. *Listen, listen to Me and you will have good things to eat ... Pay attention, come to Me, listen and your soul will live.*