

## 19<sup>th</sup> SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME      Year B

I suppose one of the most confronting images we see on our Television screens is the all too often sight of starving children. The distended tummies is bad enough to see, but the look of utter hopelessness in their eyes is probably the most disturbing thing. For most of us, these images we usually associate with droughts and crop failures in distant places. While not unknown in Australia, it is rare enough. Thank God!

We all know what it is like to feel hungry as we approach the next meal. We may say “I’m starving”, but most of us can be confident that this is short-lived. At first really hungry people – starving people - clamour for food, but a time comes when there is no longer the strength or the energy to make a fuss. A terrible, energy-saving apathy sets in as people struggle to stay alive from one moment to the next. Even the search for food gradually demands too much energy and eventually becomes impossible. In the meantime they search for food in places that, in better times, they would have refused to consider. Finally the point is reached when people can no longer feed themselves; someone else must provide the food, one tiny morsel at a time.

Jesus had just fed five thousand people with five loaves and two fish, but they were not satisfied. Having seen one miracle, they wanted more and they complained when Jesus refused to perform tricks just to keep them happy. The people were also irritated because Jesus had described himself as “the bread that comes down from heaven”. They wanted fresh bread to save themselves the effort of buying or making it. They didn’t understand Jesus when he described himself as “bread”. They were not cannibals; the idea of seeing him as food was abhorrent. They were not prepared to see that their problem was not physical hunger but spiritual starvation.

You know, if we take time to think about it, there is something in every one of us that longs for “something else”. We find it hard to accept that this present life is “all that there is”. This hope for “new life” / “heaven” / “being reunited with our loved ones” – call it what you will – is very real. And it challenges us to see life as more than just a limited, material experience that has no meaning. To be fully human we need to recognise, celebrate and grow the “spiritual” part of our life.

Jesus knew that the people who came to listen to him experienced more than one form of hunger. It was easy for him to provide loaves of bread. It was more difficult to show them that their real hunger could only be satisfied by a personal relationship with God. The Eucharist is real food for our journey through life. Jesus saw our spiritual starvation and offered himself as the bread of life.

We need Christ – that's obvious. But we also need one another. To be a believer, or just a spiritual person, in today's world can be a lonely business. Here is where the community comes in. We are a community of believers whose common faith strengthens the faith of each individual.

The first Christians supported one another. They forgave each other's offences, shared their possessions, and fostered the spirit of community. Sharing creates a bond, and bonding leads to sharing. The Eucharist was at the centre of everything. It was this that bound them together and enabled them to offer a loving service to one another. A goal for ourselves, individually and as a community as we go in peace to love and serve the Lord.