



HOMILY

18TH SUNDAY OF THE YEAR A

1-2 AUGUST 2020

I was talking the other day to a friend about eating out by oneself. We agreed for example it is probably easier to eat out by oneself at lunchtime than in the evening for supper. Then what sort of eating place, do you chose? Probably it's lonelier to be in a full blown restaurant than to be somewhere more down market. It can seem unfair for why should singletons be discriminated in such ways? We have all sorts of 'isms these days to with age, identity and gender but supposing you are simply on your own, there is no 'ism for that!

Sometimes we chose to be alone just as Jesus did at the beginning of the gospel. John the Baptism, traditionally regarded as his cousin, has been executed cruelly and wholly unjustifiably executed. We all know the sensation that we want to be alone. We have experienced some huge shock and natural reaction is to wish be by ourselves or else with a few close friends.

However, Jesus was a public figure and it was difficult for him to escape the crowd. Just as paparazzi hound nowadays public figures Jesus found himself surrounded by a large crowd demanding attention and who needed feeding. It sounds as if the disciples wanted to be rid of this rabble. That would be hardly surprising. But for Jesus it's not a matter of finding enough food. It's a matter of feeding them with the right food - the food for the soul that the inner man and woman need.

The five loaves and two fish which are rustled up by the disciples have a great symbolism. Five is sometimes seen as the symbol of man with his two arms, two legs and the torso of the torso. (including the head.) It's a bit like the famous print by Leonardo de Vinci. The gospel reminds of the humanity of Jesus in showing compassion towards mankind and not seeking some way out of an awkward situation. He feeds them with the bread of life, and fish which represent the depth of our beings caught from out of the depth of the lake. We are not therefore talking about making sure the crowd isn't hungry. We are not talking about the feed which we really need, and which Jesus Christ can give us as long as we can ourselves open to his generosity.

And so Jesus wanted to be alone in his traumatic circumstances but he recognised the craving of the crowds who longed to be nourished. Is there not a kind of loneliness in the crowd. So often crowds are lonely anonymous places where we lose our identity and personality. Big cities are particularly lonely despite the millions of people who live in them. There are so many people around but there is no one to talk to. We become depersonalised. Like the crowd in the gospel we long some kind of nourishment which will take away this malaise.

