

18th Sunday (A)

2nd August 2026

‘All you can eat!’

Is 55: *come and eat!* Rom 8: *Nothing in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ.* Mt 14:13–21: feeding of the 5000

Here at Newman House, maybe the ‘Feeding of the 5000’ doesn’t seem *quite* such a huge miracle after all! I mean, it almost seems to happen here often, especially on term-time Sundays! I worked out that NH provides about 1000 meals more-or-less every week! OK, perhaps not 5000 in one sitting, like our Lord, and not from only 5 loaves and 2 fish! Even so, the food we enjoy here in the refectory of NH echoes nicely the ‘Messianic banquet’ — God feeding His people — as Isaiah beautifully described it, there, in the 1st reading: *listen diligently to Me, and eat what is good; and delight yourselves in rich food.* It’s good to give thanks to God for these blessings.

‘*The Feeding of the 5000.*’ It’s a very significant occasion; *all four Gospels* relate the event. One of the most striking things is the fact that there’s so much left over! *12 baskets-ful of scraps!* What can we make of that? Well, if you’re 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 time and efforts on them. It’s all part of being in love.

God is always extravagant, super-abundant with His gifts. Look at the universe: its very size, its 100bn galaxies each containing 100bn stars. The scale of the universe can hardly be imagined: we still can’t see all of it, even with modern telescopes! On our own planet, the extravagance of creation is far more than ever God ‘needed’ to create: its beauty and complexity, its preponderance of fine detail, is the work of the greatest mind, the most fervent lover. I’m just back from my holidays, and being on holiday, for me, includes enjoying the wonder of the natural world, the landscape, the weather, the greenery, the wildlife. I think we sense this; being in nature does us good: in such places 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 the human brain, 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 all 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 2 fish and 5 loaves, to feed the 5000. 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 miraculous feeding is 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 5 loaves and 2 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 Mass this Sunday, let's feel this closeness to the Lord. Whilst we are fed well and in abundance, here in this society — and in this house! — 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 community house, a place for meeting and eating, but it is a *sanctuary*, a sacred space, a place constructed around the *chapel*. The heart of Newman House is the Blessed Sacrament, Jesus's abiding presence under the appearance of food, the "Bread of Life," the Eucharist. The heart of our life together, here, then — whether you live here long term, or are a visitor — is the Mass: to come to give thanks for all our life's blessings, the enormous *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 diligently to Me, and eat what is good; and delight yourselves in rich food. Incline your ear, and come to Me; hear, that your soul may live.*