

18th Sunday of the Year

In light of the first reading from Isaiah we would do well listen to what God, through the scriptures, is saying to us. To quote the prophet, 'Pay attention, come to me, listen and your soul will live.' Hundreds of years later Jesus will tell us, 'I have come so that you may have life and live it to the full.'

One of the words that has come up several times in the scripture of the last few weeks is compassion. Today we find the word in the psalm telling us that God is full of compassion, and we see Jesus in the gospel passage being compassionate by healing the sick and then providing food for the hungry. Compassion literally means to 'suffer with' someone else, to share their pain and, importantly, to do what we can to alleviate that pain. The story of the feeding of the 5,000 is in all four gospels reminding us how important this incident had been in the collective memory of the first followers of Jesus. It speaks of hospitality, of there being sufficient for all even against all the odds, of nobody being sent home hungry. Given the four actions of Jesus when he took, blessed, broke and gave the bread we see how the Church interprets this story in terms of Eucharist, where we are fed with the Word and nourished by the gift of Jesus himself. Our celebrating the Eucharist, even for some of us, virtually, reminds us that we belong to a global community and that we are invited to show compassion to our brothers and sisters throughout the world, responding, as far as we can, to the different hungers that people experience. One of those hungers is for peace based not on force but on mutual respect and trust.

This coming week we will have the 75th anniversaries of the dropping of the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and the Saddleworth Peace Group is holding a vigil outside the Methodist Church on Thursday 6th August at 6.30pm. Towards the end of the vigil we will read the Affirmation, as adapted by Saddleworth Peace Movement, from the declaration delivered outside the United Nations Second Special Session on Disarmament, 1982. It is available in the newsletter this week.

In preparing for this homily I read some words by Setsuko Thurlow, who survived the Hiroshima bomb when she was thirteen years old. These words are from her 2017 Nobel Prize acceptance speech: "I speak as a member of the family of hibakusha – those of us who, by some miraculous chance, survived the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. For more than seven decades, we have worked for the total abolition of nuclear weapons. . . We refused to sit idly in terror as the so-called great powers took us past nuclear dusk and brought us recklessly close to nuclear midnight. . . We said: humanity and nuclear weapons cannot coexist."

In a world hungry for upholding the rights of every person, for a vaccine for the coronavirus pandemic, for a fairer distribution of resources, for the hungry to be fed, the homeless, housed, the naked clothed, children educated, the sick made well, and for peace, we would do well to ponder the words, 'humanity and nuclear weapons cannot coexist,' and ask what other things cannot 'coexist with humanity' e.g. injustice, greed, violence, abuse of power, dishonesty, lack of integrity etc and do something about it.

Bidding Prayers for the 18th Sunday of the Year

CELEBRANT:

Let us offer our prayer in the name of Jesus, whose heart was moved with pity for the vast crowd.

READER:

For the disciples of Jesus – that they may distribute the bread of life and the wine of hope to all who hunger.

Lord in your mercy

For arms makers, nations at war, and all who would engage in terror as we keep the 75th anniversaries of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki later this week – that they may soon come to a transformation of heart and walk the pathway that leads to lasting peace.

Lord in your mercy

For peoples of differing cultures – that we may recognize our common humanity, learn how to sit down together at the banquet of life, and reverence the earth that is home to all.

Lord in your mercy

For those who lead the nations of this world – that they may listen to the cries of the hungry and work toward an equitable distribution of the resources of the planet.

Lord in your mercy

For those who have died, all victims of violence, accident, natural disaster and the pandemic and, Terence Green, Brian Keaveney, Eileen Godfrey, David Burke, John Carr and Louise Harrison whose anniversaries occur this week – that they and all who have died may rest in peace and rise in glory.

Lord in your mercy

Either aloud or in silence we pray for our own special intentions...pause...then

Lord in your mercy

We ask the prayers of Mary as we say, Hail Mary...

CELEBRANT:

God of love, you long to satisfy our needs even before we give voice to them. As you fed the multitudes with a few loaves and some fish, listen now to these prayers of your people, gathered to be fed at the tables of your Holy Word and your Holy Eucharist. We ask this through Christ our Lord.