

Sunday Message

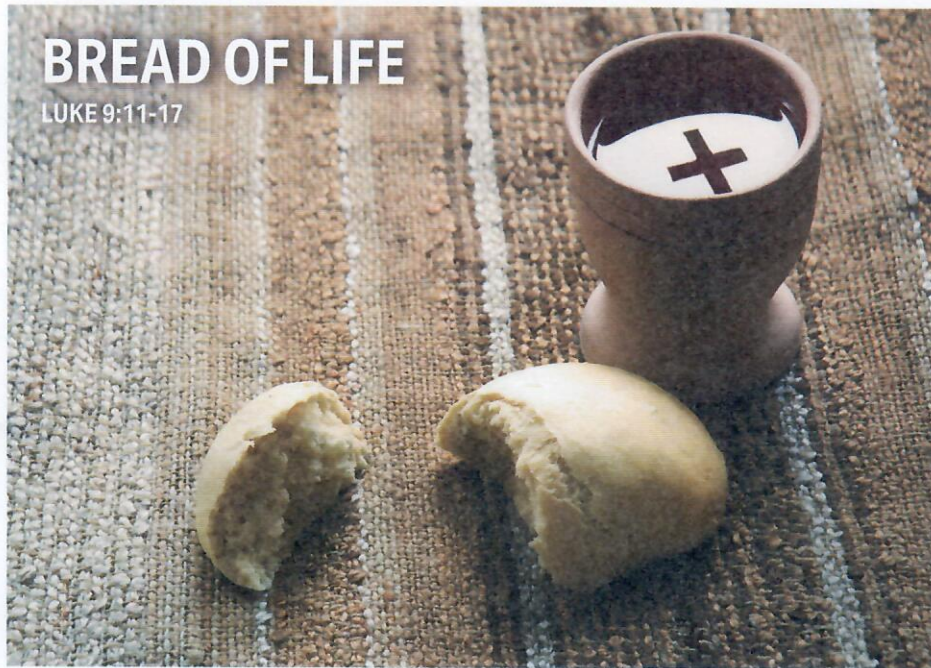
THE MOST HOLY BODY AND BLOOD OF CHRIST

THE WORD

Year C • 22 June 2025 • Psalter Week 4

BREAD OF LIFE

LUKE 9:11-17



One of the worst outrages of the Second World War was the siege of Leningrad (St Petersburg), from September 1941.

The Nazis surrounded the city soon after invading the Soviet Union, and their strategy was to starve its 2.5 million citizens into submission. The siege lasted nine hundred days. As food stocks dwindled, the population starved. Over 800,000 people died from hunger and hypothermia. The situation was so dire some resorted to cannibalism.

But there remained one route into the city. Lake Ladoga lies east of Leningrad. As soon as it froze solid that first winter of 1941/42, Russians were able to mark out a route across the lake that conveys of trucks and sleighs could take at night when they were safer from German attack. Despite many setbacks, scores of transports got through – bringing food and supplies into the city and evacuating those who were sick and injured. Citizens gave a name to that winter ice road across Lake Ladoga. They called it the Road of Life because it provided them with the essentials they needed to survive. The Road of Life gave them bread for life.

Leningrad survived the siege and, after the war, began its slow recovery. But its people never forgot that without the Road of Life across the frozen lake, the city would have capitulated. The Road of Life provided bread of life, literally.

The Gospel for today's feast tells of the feeding of the five thousand. It's one of several stories in the Gospels that describe a miraculous multiplying of food. Jesus can see that the people are hungry, and he feeds them. It's always the same. Jesus encounters people in distress, and aches with compassion for them. He heals them, feeds them, restores them, gives them life. Everything he says and does gives life.

Today's feast and the story of the multiplication of the loaves are a reminder to us of what the Eucharist means. The Eucharist is a celebration during which God nourishes us with God's own life. In John's Gospel, Jesus tells us: "I am the Bread of Life." The Eucharist is our food for life on the road of life. It helps us face the challenges of every day. Just as the Road of Life provided the people of Leningrad with the bread they needed to survive the war, the Eucharist provides us with the sustenance we need on our road of life. And it calls us together, draws us together, makes us one. Sharing the one bread from the one table makes us one family, responsible for one another. This is what we celebrate on today's great feast. ■

REFLECT

I wish to reflect on how we live the Eucharist in our daily lives, as a Church and individual Christians. First, the Eucharist affects the way we see others. In his life, Christ manifested his love by being with people, and by sharing their desires and problems. So too the Eucharist brings us together with others – young and old, poor and affluent, neighbours and visitors. The Eucharist calls us to see all of them as our brothers and sisters, and to see in them the face of Christ.

Second, in the Eucharist we experience the forgiveness of God and the call to forgive. We celebrate the Eucharist not because we are worthy, but because we recognise our need for God's mercy, incarnate in Jesus Christ. In the Eucharist, we renew the gift of the Body and Blood of Christ for the remission of sins, and our hearts are enlarged to receive and show mercy.

Third, in the Eucharistic celebration, we are nourished as the Christian community by Christ's Word and Life. It is from the Eucharist that the Church receives continually her identity and mission. It is in our celebration that Christ fills us with his grace, so that our lives may be consonant with our worship of God in the Liturgy. Let us live the Eucharist in a spirit of faith and prayer, with the certainty that the Lord will bring to fulfilment all that he has promised."

Pope Francis ■

LEARN

The feast of the Body and Blood of Christ reminds us of the centrality of the Eucharist in the life of the Church.

Jesus is the Bread of Life.

In the Eucharist we receive the Body and Blood of Christ.

We are Christ's hands and Christ's feet.

SAY

"Lord, you nourish me with the Bread of Life on the road of life. Help me to share that love with those who need it most. Amen."

PRAY

Pray for a deeper appreciation of the gift of the Eucharist.

DO

Try to visit the Blessed Sacrament as often as you can.

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

*He fed them with the finest wheat
and satisfied them with honey from the rock.*

COLLECT

O God, who in this wonderful Sacrament
have left us a memorial of your Passion,
grant us, we pray,
so to revere the sacred mysteries of your Body and Blood
that we may always experience in ourselves
the fruits of your redemption.
Who live and reign with God the Father
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.

Amen.

FIRST READING Genesis 14:18-20

A reading from the Book of Genesis.

In those days: Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. He was priest of God Most High. And he blessed Abram and said,

'Blessed be Abram by God Most High,
Possessor of heaven and earth;
and blessed be God Most High,
who has delivered your enemies into your hand!'

And Abram gave him a tenth of everything.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM Psalm 110 (109):1. 2. 3. 4. R. 4bc

R: *You are a priest for ever,
according to the order of Melchizedek.*

1. The LORD's revelation to my lord:
'Sit at my right hand,
until I make your foes your footstool.' **R.**
2. The LORD will send from Sion
your sceptre of power:
rule in the midst of your foes. **R.**
3. With you is princely rule
on the day of your power.
In holy splendour, from the womb before the dawn,
I have begotten you. **R.**
4. The LORD has sworn an oath he will not change:
'You are a priest for ever,
according to the order of Melchizedek.' **R.**

SECOND READING 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

A reading from the First Letter of Saint Paul to the Corinthians.

Brothers and sisters: I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you; that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, 'This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.'

In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.' For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

ACCLAMATION BEFORE THE GOSPEL John 6:51

R: *Alleluia, alleluia.*

I am the living bread that came down from heaven, says the Lord.
If anyone eats of this bread, he will live for ever.

R: *Alleluia.*

GOSPEL Luke 9:11b-17

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke.

At that time: Jesus spoke to the crowd of the kingdom of God and cured those who needed healing. Now the day began to wear away, and the Twelve came and said to him, 'Send the crowd away to go into the surrounding villages and countryside to find lodging and get provisions, for we are here in a desolate place.' But he said to them, 'You give them something to eat.' They said, 'We have no more than five loaves and two fish – unless we are to go and buy food for all these people.' For there were about five thousand men. And he said to his disciples, 'Make them sit down in groups of about fifty each.' And they did so, and made them all sit down. And taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven and said a blessing over them. Then he broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples to set before the crowd. And they all ate and were satisfied. And what was left over was picked up, twelve baskets of broken pieces.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Grant your Church, O Lord, we pray,
the gifts of unity and peace,
whose signs are to be seen in mystery
in the offerings we here present.
Through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

*Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood
remains in me and I in him, says the Lord.*

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Grant, O Lord, we pray,
that we may delight for all eternity
in that share in your divine life,
which is foreshadowed in the present age
by our reception of your precious Body and Blood.
Who live and reign for ever and ever.

Amen.