

NOTHING CAN SEPARATE US FROM THE LOVE OF GOD

18th Sunday in Ordinary time ~ 2 August 2020



The Miracle of the Loaves and Fishes by James Tissot, 1886-1896 | public domain | edited www.stjosephsbrackenridge

CONGRATULATIONS & WELCOME TO TAMIKA

Congratulations to Tamika who has now been welcomed into the church and been confirmed in the joy of the Holy Spirit.

Let us discover together as a community, the Word of God.

We are invited to read this passage from St. Paul to the Roman Christians very slowly.

LETTER OF ST. PAUL TO THE ROMANS 8:35, 37-39

*'Who will separate us from the love of Christ?
Will hardship, or distress, or persecution,
or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?
No, in all these things
we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.
For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels,
nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers,
nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation,
will be able to separate us
from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.'*

IMAGINE THE EARLY CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

Imagine a group of house churches,
groups of Christians gathering at different homes around the city of Rome.
And Paul's letter is shared among them.

They are a minority.

They are living in the capital of the Roman Empire
which has very different beliefs.

The Roman empire is powerful.

Yet from Paul's letter they read the very powerful words above.

St Paul witnesses to the love of God in his life.

IMAGINE A CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY TODAY

We are now invited to think about a Christian community today that is reading the passage above.

- * Perhaps a community under COVID-19 lockdown in Victoria.
- * Perhaps a community in a COVID- 19 hotspot cluster in NSW.
- * Perhaps a Christian minority living in a country that harasses them.
- * Perhaps a Christian community suffering from high unemployment.

Imagine such a community.

How do they think?

What do they feel?

How do they find hope?

Now we again read this passage from St Paul.

*'Who will separate us from the love of Christ?
Will hardship, or distress,
or persecution,
or famine, or nakedness,
or peril, or sword?
No, in all these things
we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.*

*For I am convinced
that neither death, nor life,
nor angels, nor rulers,
nor things present, nor things to come,
nor powers,
nor height, nor depth,
nor anything else in all creation,
will be able to separate us
from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.'*

No matter what is happening,
we can reach out to the love of God in Jesus Christ.

In hard times a helpful way is to print out the words from St. Paul and place them on your wall at home, somewhere where we can see them. Perhaps on your mobile or on your computer or tablet as a face saver. Perhaps on the front of your diary or on a card in your pocket, or as a bookmark.

Place it somewhere where the *Word of God* can call out to you regularly.

Let us read the Gospel from Matthew.
Jesus has heard that John the Baptist has died.
In his grief he needs time alone.

In this time alone, he needs to pray.
We know ourselves those times when we need to be alone.
Jesus invites us to have time alone with Him.

The crowds seek Jesus out.
Have they heard the news as well, about the death of John the Baptist?

John has prepared the way for Jesus.
Now we reflect on the way Jesus responds to the crowds.

GOSPEL OF MATTHEW 14:13-21

*'Now when Jesus heard this,
he withdrew from there in a boat to a deserted place by himself.
But when the crowds heard it,
they followed him on foot from the towns.'*

*When he went ashore, he saw a great crowd;
and he had compassion for them and cured their sick.*

*When it was evening, the disciples came to him and said,
'This is a deserted place, and the hour is now late;
send the crowds away so that they may go into the villages
and buy food for themselves.'*

*Jesus said to them,
'They need not go away; you give them something to eat.'
They replied,
'We have nothing here but five loaves and two fish.'*

*And he said,
'Bring them here to me.'*

*Then he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass.
Taking the five loaves and the two fish,
he looked up to heaven,
and blessed and broke the loaves,
and gave them to the disciples,
and the disciples gave them to the crowds.*

*And all ate and were filled;
and they took up what was left over of the broken pieces,
twelve baskets full.
And those who ate were about five thousand men,
besides women and children.'*

NO EXCUSES

When God asks us to move forward, what are our excuses?

The disciples seem to have a good excuse:

'We have nothing here but five loaves and two fish.'

Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Jesus Christ.

Having five loaves and two fish, does not separate us from the love God in Jesus Christ.

Jesus shows us how.

He says, *'Bring them here to me.'*

The disciples listen to Jesus.

They act, by bringing the loaves and fish forward.

They see and hear Jesus instructing the people *'to sit down on the grass'*

Jesus prays.

The disciples notice that Jesus:

*'looked up to heaven,
and blessed and broke the loaves,
and gave them to the disciples'*

The disciples learn that they are to share with others.

'the disciples gave them to the crowds.'

Through the love of God, there is more than enough to feed the people.

The crowd are full.

And there is more remaining than the five loaves with which they began.

Nothing can separate us from the love of God.

Jesus responded with compassion and healed.

Jesus responded by showing them the abundant love of God in action.

Jesus invites us to trust God, and with God, to make a difference together.

- Whether it is the small house communities of Rome that read the letter from Paul,
- Or whether the crowds seeking Jesus after the immense loss of the prophet, John the Baptist,
- Or the Christian community in Matthew's time,
- Or our communities today

the grace of God is abundant.

In the grace of God, we pray together.

Fr Gerry

[Readings:<https://universalis.com/Australia/20200802/mass.htm>]

*‘Who will separate us from the love of Christ?
Will hardship, or distress, or persecution,
or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?
No, in all these things we are more than
conquerors through him who loved us.*

*For I am convinced that neither death, nor life,
nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present,
nor things to come, nor powers, nor height,
nor depth, nor anything else in all creation,
will be able to separate us
from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.’*

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