

'MY SEVEN RESPONSES TO JESUS' - 5th AUGUST 2018

18th Sunday Ordinary Time.

THANKSGIVING FOR THE FETE

Remembering the multiplication of loaves and fishes last week, we thank God this weekend for Saturday's wonderful St Joseph's Fete.

So many hard-working team members, stall coordinators and teams, parking attendants, runners, those who set up and later dismantled, catering meals and drinks, and many others who donated and baked and showed their craft skills.

Especially to our school children and others who performed, sang, danced and gave us live music and orchestra.

Exhaustion for some as they now seek well-deserved rest at home.

A Fete depends on a community sharing its giftedness.

A Fete gives the opportunity to catch up with friends and former school mates and their families.

And to remember the history over 40 years.

Building on what has gone before.

In the event of the loaves and fishes, Jesus taught the crowd that it could become a community rather than only a crowd.

A community that cares and wants to share.

Thank you very much to the Fete coordinators and committee and all involved.

Thank you to the P&F, children, school staff and parents and families,

And the regular support of other parish members.

Thank you, each of you.

And especially, we thank you God.

Fr Gerry

GOSPEL OF JOHN 6:24-35

Today we focus on the later part of today's Gospel John 6:30-35.

Notice the conversation and what it reveals about Jesus and the crowd

*'So they said to him,
'What sign are you going to give us then,
so that we may see it and believe you?
What work are you performing?
Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness;
as it is written,
"He gave them bread from heaven to eat."*

*Then Jesus said to them,
'Very truly, I tell you,*

*it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven,
but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven.
For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven
and gives life to the world.'*

They said to him, 'Sir, give us this bread always.'

Jesus said to them,

*'I am the bread of life.
Whoever comes to me will never be hungry,
and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.'*

We remember earlier in the chapter that Jesus performed the miracle of the loaves and fishes. The crowd intended to forcibly make him their king. (Verses 6:14-15) Jesus withdrew. The crowd had a false expectation of the role of messiah and prophet. The Gospel passage reads:

"When the people saw the sign that he had done, they began to say, 'This is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world.' When Jesus realized that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, he withdrew again to the mountain by himself."

HOW OFTEN DO WE TRY TO FORCE GOD TO DO IT OUR WAY?
HOW OFTEN DO WE WANT OUR PRAYER ANSWERED ONLY IN ONE NARROW WAY – OUR WAY?
HOW OFTEN DO WE WANT GOD TO PERFORM FOR US?
HOW OFTEN DO WE KEEP TRYING TO TEST GOD?

Becoming a political messiah was not what God the Father was calling Jesus to be. Jesus did not need to live out the crowd's expectations and interpretations. Jesus is the one inviting us.

JESUS INVITATION AND HIS LOVE

- ± **Jesus invites us to respond in freedom to his love.**
 - Jesus does not want us to be a stereotype, or a robot.
 - Jesus does not want us to be imprisoned by peer pressure.
 - Jesus does not want us to be limited by a mask we wear.
 - Jesus does not want us to be an unreal image we present to people around us.
 - Jesus does not want us to be a captive of our fears.
 - Jesus does not want us to sit on the fence while our neighbour suffers.
- ± **The love of Jesus sets us free to be our true selves.**

GOD SAYS I AM, WHO I AM

God is revealed to Moses in Exodus 3:14 as *"I am, who I am"*.

God can't be fully described by our vocabulary.

God can't be confined by our perceptions.

Even with our human gifts of poetry, lyrics painting and sculpture, we only hint at the richness of God's loving.

Did you notice the verb *'am'* twice.?

God is always living and being and active.

In other parts of Scripture, we learn not only that God is love, but also that **God is continually loving**.

We are made in God's image and likeness.

God is always inviting us to fulfill the way that we are made – in loving.

In today's passage of John's Gospel, Jesus adds to the Old Testament revelation of God speaking to Moses in the Book of Exodus. Jesus reveals himself to the disciples and the crowd, saying *I am the Bread of Life*.

In the following chapters, Jesus reveals who he is, in another six ways. Let us now reflect on these famous seven *"I am"* Statements.

SEVEN STATEMENTS OF JESUS, SAYING 'I AM'

1. I AM THE BREAD OF LIFE [John 6:35]

Context: After the miracle of sharing in the multiplication of loaves and fishes.

*'I am the bread of life.
Whoever comes to me will never be hungry,
and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.'*

2. I AM THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD [John 8:12, 9:5]

Context: Jesus speaking while teaching in the treasury of the temple

8:12 *'I am the light of the world.
Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness
but will have the light of life.'*

Context: after speaking about the works of God, and before healing the man born blind.

9:5 *'As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.'*

3. I AM THE GATE [John 10:7, 9]

Context: After Jesus cured the man born blind and later encountered him.

10:7 *'I am the gate for the sheep'*
10:9 *'I am the gate.
Whoever enters by me will be saved,
and will come in and go out and find pasture'*

4. I AM THE GOOD SHEPHERD [John 10:11, 14]

Context: After Jesus cured the man born blind and later encountered him.

10:11 *'I am the good shepherd.*

The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.'

10:14 *'I am the good shepherd.*

I know my own and my own know me'

5. I AM THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE [John 11:25-26]

Context: Jesus in dialogue with Martha after Lazarus had died.

And before grieving in tears, and before raising Lazarus from the dead.

'I am the resurrection and the life.

*Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live,
and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die.*

Do you believe this?'

6. I AM THE WAY AND THE TRUTH AND THE LIFE [John 14:6]

Context: Jesus prepares the disciples for his death
and responds to the question of Thomas, saying

'I am the way, and the truth, and the life.

No one comes to the Father except through me.'

7. I AM THE TRUE VINE [John 15:1,5]

Context: After Jesus promises the Holy Spirit will come as their advocate,
And after Jesus gives them his peace,
And after inviting them to rise and be with him on the way.

15:1 *'I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine-grower'*

15:5 *'I am the vine, you are the branches.*

*Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit,
because apart from me you can do nothing.'*

John's Gospel doesn't make a list of seven **"I am"** statements in one chapter.
Instead, each is revealed in particular circumstances.

In chapters 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 14 and 15.

Each statement is within an event in people's lives.

In your own circumstances,

WHERE DO YOU FIND JESUS SPEAKING TO YOU, REVEALING HIMSELF?

WHERE IN YOUR LIFE DO YOU FEEL THE SPIRIT PROMPTING YOU TO PRAY WITH JESUS, IN THESE SEVEN PHRASES AS:

1. **I AM THE BREAD OF LIFE** [John 6:35]
Who nourishes us. Who gives meaning and purpose.
2. **I AM THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD** [John 8:12, 9:5]
Who shows us the way forward and lights our path.
3. **I AM THE GATE** [John 10:7, 9]
Who shows us how we enter the next part of our life's journey, and how we turn over to the next chapter of our lives
4. **I AM THE GOOD SHEPHERD** [John 10:11, 14]
Who cares for us.
Who searches for us when we are lost. Who brings us back,
Who lifts us and holds us and protects us when needed.
5. **I AM THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE** [John 11:25-26]
Who invites us into eternal life
Who is life giving – in this life and in eternity
Who gives up hope.
6. **I AM THE WAY AND THE TRUTH AND THE LIFE** [John 14:6]
We follow the way of Jesus.
Some early Christians were known as people of the Way.

We find the truth in Jesus. The truth will set us free.
We are already in a life-giving relationship with God.
The fullness of that deep relationship is still to come.
7. **I AM THE TRUE VINE** [John 15:1,5]
We are never alone,
we are connected as branches to the life-giving vine.
We can describe the feeling, the connectedness
of our being a branch of the vine,
with God's loves flowing through us.

PRAYER REFLECTIONS – AN INVITATION

You are now invited during the week to share two reflections within your prayer time.

1. Changing each statement of Jesus into a statement from you.
For example, changing '**I am the light of the world**'
into your faith response '**Jesus, you are the light of the world**'.

And slowly repeat it humbly a few times to Jesus,
pausing in silence each time.
And then just be with Jesus.

2. Reading the context of any one of those 'I am' statements in the Gospel and prayerfully imagining that you are there.

Live the experience humbly, and see yourself attentive to Jesus
as he looks directly at you, as he makes that statement to you.
Sit with the experience humbly. Sit with Jesus for a while.

Let us pray.

Fr. Gerry

[Readings: <http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/080518.cfm>]

[Parish Facebook: <http://bit.ly/parishFacebook05082018>]

