

Everyone is fed. It seems impossible to us with our limited imagination. We are not God after all. And that's the whole point – we are not God after all. We have not brought ourselves into being nor to an end – though we might think these within our power. Nor indeed do we have full control over our lives – note the qualification: 'full' control, because we do have the possibility of co-operation, of trust in this greater power, this greater story to which we belong – everyone that is, all called by this one voice to live life in the fullness of God's love, God's desire to keep us in being, to bring us to maturity in Christ. Each of today's readings is about this dynamic of trust, trusting in a larger story than our own. Again note the plurality there: this isn't a journey we can make on our own both in the sense of being without God or without one another, it's all one. We make the journey in cooperation with one another and "one another" as representative of the whole world, in all its glorious physicality. You may think I'm getting lyrical here, romantic even, but nothing could be less abstract or ethereal than the beauty of the creation of which we are a part and which sustains us and which we in turn are called to sustain so that there may be bread for all. There's an argument going on at the moment over the Oxford Dictionary's description of nature as

*“ the phenomena of the physical world collectively, including plants, animals, the landscape and other features and products of the earth, as opposed to human or human creations e g “ the breath taking beauty of nature”.*

The argument being that we shouldn't be separated from nature in this way as we are fully part of it. The aim may well be to secularize the whole business in the sense of “reducing” us to mere animals just like the rest but it can equally be seen as a restoration of our true status before God and before one another. We are part of a world in which nothing is independent of anything else. The significance of the twelve baskets left over after the feeding of the five thousand is not only that all the twelve tribes of Israel are to be fed but that nothing of creation is to be allowed to perish, that is, to be wasted. And in John's version of this miracle, common to all the gospels, the eucharistic connections are made explicit even in the word eucharist or “ giving thanks”. Our eucharist here is the feeding of the five thousand, is symbolic not only for ourselves but for the whole world. Through the medium of bread and wine, however attenuated now, we reaffirm God's willingness to enter fully into our lives, to live as we live in all our physicality, our connectedness with the rest of creation not in order to be removed from this world but to live more fully in it, in all it's beauty and wonder and sufficiency. It's a re- affirmation of our trust in God and God's trust in us. Everyone is fed in this larger story.

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