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11 SATURDAY

Saturday, 5th Week of Ordinary Time

1Kings 12: 26-32, 13:33-34

Ps 105: 6-7, 19-22

Mark 8: 1-10

How Jesus fed a large crowd of people with just a few loaves of bread and some fish is a central and very important incident in the gospels. There are variations in the details and emphasis in the way each gospel tells the story (and scholars discuss whether there were two or more such incidents, or just one which was remembered differently by different people). The image of loaves and fish has carried great symbolism and meaning for Jesus' followers ever since, especially in reference to the Eucharist. St Mark's gospel describes the incident simply and matter-of-factly. "I feel sorry for all these people", Jesus said, noting that a large crowd had been following Him around for a couple of days, some of them coming from quite a distance away. Was it simply the crowd's hungriness that was on His mind? If they were hungry, what about Jesus himself and His disciples: weren't they hungry too? And if He was feeling sorry for them, why did He not either send them away earlier, or give them something to eat earlier? At the end of the incident, according to St Mark, He quickly sent them all away anyway, as He hurried on to His next destination. Praying and meditating on this gospel, let those questions come into focus. Speak to the Lord about His feelings for that crowd, and ask to share His compassion for everyone, however great or small their sufferings or discomforts. Even more, to share His compassion for the deep hunger of humankind, and the personal hunger of each of us.

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