

**ENTRANCE ANTIPHON** (or a hymn) God is in his holy place, God who unites those who dwell in his house; he himself gives might and strength to his people.

**RESPONSORIAL PSALM** (Ps 144)

**ANTIPHON:** The hand of the Lord feeds us; he answers all our needs.

**RESPONSE:** **The hand of the Lord feeds us; he answers all our needs.**

**LECTOR:** All your creatures shall thank you, O Lord, and your friends shall repeat their blessing. They shall speak of the glory of your reign and declare your might, O God. **R.**

**LECTOR:** The eyes of all creatures look to you and you give them their food in due time. You open wide your hand, grant the desires of all who live. **R.**

**LECTOR:** The Lord is just in all his ways and loving in all his deeds. He is close to all who call him, who call on him from their hearts. **R.**

**GOSPEL ACCLAMATION** Alleluia, alleluia! A great prophet has appeared among us; God has visited his people. Alleluia!

**COMMUNION ANTIPHON** (or a hymn) Bless the Lord, O my soul, and never forget all his benefits.

**Or**

Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God.

**TODAY'S READINGS** 2 Kings 4:42-44; Ephesians 4:1-6; John 6:1-15

**NEXT WEEK** (18th Sunday, Year B) Exodus 16:2-4, 12-15; Psalm 77; Ephesians 4:17, 20-24; John 6:24-35

*A friend  
in God*

### Prayer is Life

In the podcast Prayer and Friendship, Redemptorist priest David Hore CSsR reflects on the wisdom of St Alphonsus Liguori and St Teresa of Avila. As Fr David eloquently puts it, "Prayer is not just a practice but a sharing of our innermost thoughts and fears with a friend who accepts us unconditionally". To listen go to [media/prayer-is-life-podcast/](#)



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## *The victorious cross*



28 July 2024 17th Sunday Year B

St Jerome said: "Ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ." On the back cover of my Bible, this famous line is printed beneath an image of the fourth-century hermit-saint in his study. Scriptures in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin are open on desks behind him. He seems to be taking a break from his translation project to pull the thorn out of the lion's paw.

One thing Jerome meant is that understanding the New Testament requires deep familiarity with the Old Testament, the original Scriptures. The New is contextualized by the Old. The Evangelists wrote in such a way as to embed the story of Jesus in the biblical horizon. We could therefore elaborate on Jerome's words and say: Ignorance of the Old Testament makes the New Testament opaque.

The story of Christ's feeding of the five thousand is an example of Jerome's principle. Having John 6 set beside the story of Elisha's miraculous feeding from 2 Kings 4 is useful. We can see that the gospel author emphasises parallels between Jesus and Elisha. Barley loaves are used in both miracles; incredulous disciples in both stories are commanded to feed the people; and there are plenty of leftovers in each.

The first part of Elisha's wider story chronicles seven key miracles; and John organises the first part of his story of Jesus with seven miraculous "signs." Elisha and Jesus both cure the blind, heal lepers, and raise the dead. Both are betrayed by the love of money. Even their names are similar in Hebrew: Elisha means

"God is salvation," and Jesus means "Yahweh is salvation."

When you see the similarities, the differences between the stories become more important: Elisha feeds one hundred with food enough for twenty; Jesus feeds five thousand with a lot less. Elisha feeds with bread; Jesus feeds with bread and fish; Elisha's story says "there was some left over;" Jesus' story says there were "twelve basketfuls" in excess, an incredible amount of abundance from out of such a small beginning. And the people fed by Jesus realise how much more he is than a miracle working prophet: he is "the Prophet," they exclaim, the savior-king whom Moses told them to wait for. They even try to make him king by force.

Elisha's prophetic role was to hold unfaithful kings of Israel accountable to God for their abject failure in administering justice and steering God's people away from idolatry. Elisha apparently failed: the story shows Israel falling into greater and greater apostasy that culminates in national disaster. Yet the suffering of Israel becomes the seedbed of their salvation.

The gospel story intensifies the role of the miracle-working prophet, Jesus, to the point of something truly new: the prophet is himself the expected king, and yet his kingship is unexpected. John portrays Jesus' elevation on the cross as his enthronement! An apparent failure that is actually victory. Jesus embodies the story of Israel and transforms it.

**W Chris Hackett**  
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