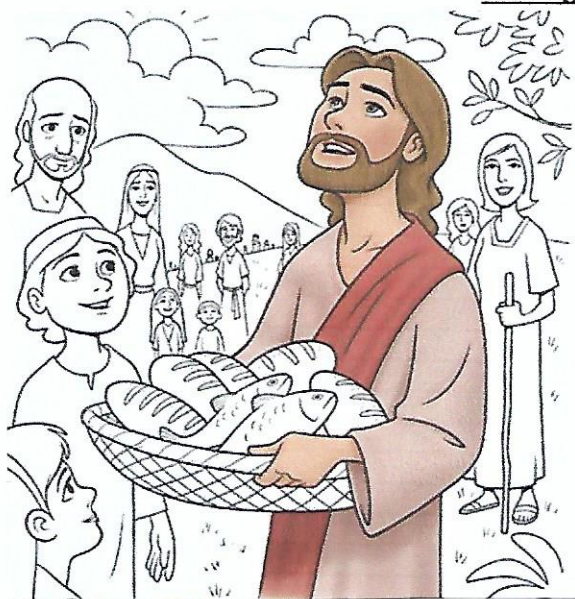


THE UPPER ALDE BENEFICE

The Eighteenth Sunday of the Year



The multiplication of the loaves and fish is the only one of Jesus' miracles recorded in all four Gospels. The early Christian community especially cherished this story because they saw this event as anticipating the Eucharist and also the final banquet in the Kingdom of God. The miracle also has strong roots in the Old Testament. In the same way that the merciful God fed the wandering Israelites with manna in the desert, Jesus, 'his heart moved with pity,' feeds the crowds who have come to hear him.

In St Matthew's account, Jesus acts out of his great compassion on the crowds. First he challenges the disciples to give what they have – five loaves and two fish. Then he performs the fourfold action that prefigures the Eucharist: Jesus takes bread, blesses, breaks and gives bread and fish to the assembled multitude, making of them a community of the Lord's banquet.

There is so much on which to reflect in this account but one of the things which always strikes me is that the disciples showed a concern similar to that of Jesus when they encouraged him to send the crowd off to buy food. However, there was a great difference, one underlined by our Lord's suggestion that the disciples give the crowd food. They felt for the crowd but they could not meet their needs!

We often find ourselves in a similar situation. We feel deeply for others who suffer in destructive relationships, who struggle financially, who are in the grip of illness, or who are experiencing the consequences of their own unwise choices. Yet again and again, it is driven home to us that there is really nothing, or very little that we can do. That's undoubtedly how the disciples felt that they observed, 'We have here only five loaves of bread and two fish.'

What happened is, of course, a great encouragement to us. Jesus took the little his disciples had and miraculously multiplied it. Our Lord still performs miracles. If we have the compassion and the willingness to offer what we have to others, he can miraculously multiply our little to meet the needs of many.

Services during August

Sunday August 2nd

9.30am Morning Prayer at Sweffling

11.00am Morning Prayer at Badingham

Sunday August 9th

9.30am Morning Prayer at Cransford

11.00am Morning Prayer at Dennington

Sunday August 16th

9,30am Morning Prayer at Bruisyard

11.00am Morning Prayer at Rendham

Sunday August 23rd

10.00am Benefice Morning Prayer at Rendham

Sunday August 30th

10.00am Benefice Morning Prayer at Sweffling