

## Mark 8: 1-10

In those days when there was again a great crowd without anything to eat, he called his disciples and said to them, <sup>2</sup>I have compassion for the crowd, because they have been with me now for three days and have nothing to eat. <sup>3</sup>If I send them away hungry to their homes, they will faint on the way—and some of them have come from a great distance.’ <sup>4</sup>His disciples replied, ‘How can one feed these people with bread here in the desert?’ <sup>5</sup>He asked them, ‘How many loaves do you have?’ They said, ‘Seven.’ <sup>6</sup>Then he ordered the crowd to sit down on the ground; and he took the seven loaves, and after giving thanks he broke them and gave them to his disciples to distribute; and they distributed them to the crowd. <sup>7</sup>They had also a few small fish; and after blessing them, he ordered that these too should be distributed. <sup>8</sup>They ate and were filled; and they took up the broken pieces left over, seven baskets full. <sup>9</sup>Now there were about four thousand people. And he sent them away. <sup>10</sup>And immediately he got into the boat with his disciples and went to the district of Dalmanutha.

**Commentary:** It is hard to believe it, isn't it? Not so much the miracle of this spectacular feeding of a large crowd, once again, (although this is spectacular too), but rather, the seeming perplexity and disbelief of the disciples. Had they not been through this before? What would it take for them to believe in miracles? But let me suggest that this is too facile a form of reasoning. There is one big difference between Jesus' response to this large group of people and that of the disciples, namely, compassion. Jesus felt compassion for these people, far from home, hungry, and in need of nourishment not only for the spirit but the body as well. Once again, divine compassion is transformed into an awesome miracle. Love blessed becomes food for the whole person.

How do you deal with overwhelming situations? Is love and trust in God the first casualties? How is God present when you are stretched to your breaking point?

In this season of Covid-19, it is difficult to trust in the long term. Far too much is uncertain. We trust science and medicine and clear-cut government rules and support. We trust the law when justice is meted out and victims are compensated. But do we trust what love can do when activated in our hearts? Do we trust the healing and transforming properties of compassion as the most important kind of food and medicine for our time? Jesus is trying to teach his disciples who have a hard time really believing, even in the face of a miracle. What about you and me?

**Prayer:** I want to believe every more deeply, O God, so that I can experience ever deeper healing and peace within. I need your compassion as medicine for my soul as much as I need medicine for my illness. I need your compassion for my deepest well-being as I need comfort and peace when I am extra vulnerable to the violence, grief and sickness all around me... surround me and fill me, O God... Amen.