

Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Sunday Mass Readings & Spiritual Leadership Guide

August 2, 2026 · Lectionary 112

Sunday Mass Readings

FIRST READING

Isaiah 55:1–3

Thus says the LORD: All you who are thirsty, come to the water! You who have no money, come, receive grain and eat; come, without paying and without cost, drink wine and milk! Why spend your money for what is not bread; your wages for what fails to satisfy? Heed me, and you shall eat well, you shall delight in rich fare. Come to me heedfully, listen, that you may have life. I will renew with you the everlasting covenant, the benefits assured to David.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Psalm 145:8–9, 15–16, 17–18

R. The hand of the Lord feeds us; he answers all our needs.

The LORD is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and of great kindness. The LORD is good to all and compassionate toward all his works.

R. The hand of the Lord feeds us; he answers all our needs.

The eyes of all look hopefully to you, and you give them their food in due season; you open your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing.

R. The hand of the Lord feeds us; he answers all our needs.

The LORD is just in all his ways and holy in all his works. The LORD is near to all who call upon him, to all who call upon him in truth.

R. The hand of the Lord feeds us; he answers all our needs.

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by Following Christ and the Teachings of His Church***



SECOND READING

Romans 8:35, 37–39

Brothers and sisters: What will separate us from the love of Christ? Will anguish, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or the sword? No, in all these things we conquer overwhelmingly through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor present things, nor future things, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

GOSPEL

Matthew 14:13–21

When Jesus heard of the death of John the Baptist, he withdrew in a boat to a deserted place by himself. The crowds heard of this and followed him on foot from their towns. When he disembarked and saw the vast crowd, his heart was moved with pity for them, and he cured their sick. When it was evening, the disciples approached him and said, “This is a deserted place and it is already late; dismiss the crowds so that they can go to the villages and buy food for themselves.” Jesus said to them, “There is no need for them to go away; give them some food yourselves.” But they said to him, “Five loaves and two fish are all we have here.” Then he said, “Bring them here to me,” and he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, he said the blessing, broke the loaves, and gave them to the disciples, who in turn gave them to the crowds. They all ate and were satisfied, and they picked up the fragments left over—twelve wicker baskets full. Those who ate were about five thousand men, not counting women and children.

All readings sourced from USCCB, Lectionary 112. bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/080226.cfm

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Reflection

Isaiah's invitation could not be more open-handed: come without money, come without merit, come and eat. The Lord's generosity is not rationed by what we deserve. In the Gospel, Jesus enacts that same extravagance in the wilderness: five loaves and two fish become enough to feed five thousand with twelve baskets left over. He does not wait for ideal conditions or adequate resources—he takes what is offered, blesses it, and multiplies it beyond all expectation. Paul closes the loop: nothing—no anguish, no famine, no power in the universe—can separate us from the love that drives that generosity. Spiritual leaders drawn from these readings learn to lead from abundance, not scarcity; to offer what little they have with open hands; and to trust that God's provision is not limited by the smallness of our resources.

Leadership Principles

PRINCIPLE 1

Lead from Abundance, Not Scarcity

Isaiah invites the thirsty to come without cost (Is 55:1). The disciples saw five loaves and two fish as a deficiency; Jesus saw it as a starting point. Leaders who lead from scarcity hoard, gatekeep, and hesitate. Leaders who lead from abundance ask: What do we have? Bless it and give it away.

PRINCIPLE 2

Bring What You Have, Not What You Wish You Had

The disciples said, "Five loaves and two fish are all we have here" (Mt 14:17). Jesus did not rebuke their inadequacy—he asked them to bring it. Spiritual leaders resist the trap of waiting until they feel fully equipped. Faithful leadership begins with offering what is actually in your hands.

PRINCIPLE 3

Move Toward the Crowd, Not Away from It

Jesus withdrew to grieve, but when the crowd followed, his heart was moved with pity and he healed their sick (Mt 14:14). Leadership is not about managing distance from need—it is about allowing need to move us. Compassion before strategy: see the person before you solve the problem.

PRINCIPLE 4

Nothing Can Separate You from the Source of Your Leadership

Paul lists every conceivable threat—death, life, angels, powers, height, depth—and declares that none of it can separate us from God's love (Rom 8:38–39). Leaders who know this lead without the paralysis of fear. Security in God's love is the bedrock of courageous, unshakeable leadership.

PRINCIPLE 5

Listen First, Then Lead

Isaiah's invitation ends with a call to listen: "Come to me heedfully, listen, that you may have life" (Is 55:3). Before offering bread, wisdom, or direction, the faithful leader returns continually to the voice of God. Listening is not passive—it is the discipline that keeps leadership rooted in something larger than strategy.

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Discussion Questions

QUESTION 1

Isaiah says, “Why spend your money for what is not bread; your wages for what fails to satisfy?” (Is 55:2). Where in your life are you investing energy in something that is not truly feeding you or the people you lead? What would it look like to redirect toward what truly satisfies?

QUESTION 2

The disciples had only five loaves and two fish, but Jesus said, “Bring them here to me” (Mt 14:18). What limited resource—time, talent, energy, or influence—are you hesitant to offer because it seems too small? What would it mean to place it in Jesus’ hands this week?

QUESTION 3

Jesus saw the crowd, and “his heart was moved with pity” (Mt 14:14). Who in your family, parish, or community needs you to move toward them this week rather than manage them from a distance? What is one concrete step you could take to close that gap?

QUESTION 4

Paul declares that nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus (Rom 8:39). What fear or threat is most undermining your confidence as a leader right now? How does Christ’s endless love help alleviate some of that fear or lack of confidence to be a leader?

QUESTION 5

Isaiah calls us to “listen, that you may have life” (Is 55:3). How consistent is your practice of listening to God before you act? What one change to your daily routine would make space for that kind of attentive listening this week?

Closing Action

A concrete, personal response drawn from the readings this week:

This week, identify one thing you have been withholding because it seems too small or insufficient. It might be a word of encouragement, an hour of attention, a skill you doubt, or a conversation you have been avoiding. Bring it to Jesus. Offer it with open hands. Then watch what he does with it. As a concrete step, write down what you are bringing and pray over it before the week is out (Mt 14:18).

“They all ate and were satisfied, and they picked up the fragments left over—twelve wicker baskets full.” — Matthew 14:20

Closing Prayer

Lord God, you invite the thirsty to come without cost and the hungry to come without payment. Forgive us for spending our energy on what does not satisfy. Open our ears to hear your voice clearly, that we may lead others toward the water that truly gives life. Jesus, you looked at a crowd of thousands and felt compassion. You took five loaves and two fish and fed them all. Teach us to bring you what we have—however small—and to trust that your blessing multiplies what our hands alone could never stretch. Make us leaders who give before we count the cost.

Holy Spirit, nothing in all creation can separate us from the love of God poured out in Christ. Anchor us in that love so that we lead without fear, serve without reservation, and trust without limit. When the resources seem impossibly small, remind us who holds them. Amen.

“The hand of the Lord feeds us; he answers all our needs.” — Psalm 145:16