

EXPLORING THE SUNDAY GOSPEL

COMMUNION CUPS

EXPLORING NEXT SUNDAY'S THEME

Introducing the Gospel

Body and blood of Christ (John 6: 51-58)

In chapter 6 John has developed a clear progression of thought from feeding the five thousand, to Jesus as the bread of life, and to Jesus giving his flesh for the life of the world. Now in verses 52-58 John leaves us in no doubt that this progression of thought is driven by the Church's experience of the eucharist. Now the two elements of the bread and the wine are linked as Jesus proclaims, 'Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you.'

Our image to stimulate reflection on John's teaching about the body and blood of Christ is *communion cups*.

Core extract from the Gospel (John 6: 53-56; for reflection throughout the week)

So Jesus said to them,
'Very truly, I tell you,
unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood,
you have no life in you.
Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life,
and I will raise them up on the last day;
for my flesh is true food and my blood is true drink.
Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me,
and I in them.'

Gospel prayer (for use throughout the week)

Lord Jesus Christ,
you teach your people
to share your bread
and to drink your cup.
Come and stand among us
when the bread is broken
and when the wine is poured,
that we may know your presence;
for you are the Bread of Life.
Amen.

READING NEXT SUNDAY'S GOSPEL

John 6: 51-58

I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live for ever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.'

The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, 'How can this man give us his flesh to eat?' So Jesus said to them, 'Very truly, I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day; for my flesh is true food and my blood is true drink. Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them. Just as the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever eats me will live because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like that which your ancestors ate, and they died. But the one who eats this bread will live for ever.'

ENGAGING WITH THE THEME

Dwelling with the text (John 6: 51-58)

Begin exploring this progression of John's eucharistic reading of the feeding of the five thousand by employing the SIFT approach of Sensing, Intuition, Feeling, and Thinking. You may find that one of these approaches comes easier to you than the others. But it is worth trying all four.

- What details in the passage catch your attention (Sensing)?
- What big ideas in the passage spark in your mind (Intuition)?
- What most touches your heart in the passage (Feeling)?
- What most stretches your mind and makes you think in the passage (Thinking)?

Thinking and talking

Identify topics within the passage that can get you thinking and talking. Here are some ideas to get you started.

- What is the significance of linking bread with 'the flesh of the Son of Man'?
- What is the significance of linking bread with 'the blood of the Son of Man'?
- What is the significance of Jesus' promise to those who eat his flesh and drink his blood?
- How does Jesus' relationship with the Father illuminate his relationship with the eucharistic community?
- What does this narrative say for us today?

Using your Bible

Explore the linking of bread and wine with flesh and blood in the synoptic tradition.

- Matthew 26: 26-29
- Luke 22: 14-21

Explore the eucharistic tradition in Paul.

- 1 Corinthians 11: 23-26

Explore images of flesh and blood in the Epistle to the Hebrews.

- Hebrews 2: 14-15
- Hebrews 9: 11-14

TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY (YEAR B) Sunday 18 August 2024

Exploring online

Widen your exploration of John's eucharistic reading of the feeding of the five thousand by looking up some of the following themes and others of your own choosing.

- Eucharistic imagery in John's Gospel
- Eucharistic poems
- Eucharistic chalices

Drawing on experience

The image to stimulate reflection on John's eucharistic reading of the feeding of the five thousand is *communion cups*. Draw on your own experience of communion cups. For example:

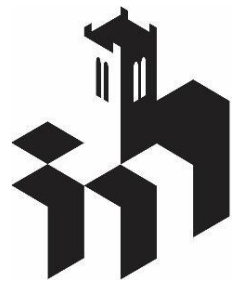
- What is your experience of receiving communion from different kinds of chalices?
- What is your experience of receiving communion from individual cups?
- Have you seen displays of chalices in churches, cathedrals, or museums?

What have you learned about communion cups?

Creating and making

This section offers pointers to some creative activities that may be inspired by John's eucharistic reading of the feeding of the five thousand or by the image of communion cups.

- Display photographs of chalices from different churches.
- Make a collage of chalices gathered from the internet.
- Make a poster of the words from different liturgies used when administering the chalice.
- Create a reflection, poem, or prayer on John's eucharistic reading of the feeding of the five thousand or on the image of communion cups.



Liverpool Cathedral

EXPLORING THE SUNDAY GOSPEL

Each week we are inviting people in their homes to look forward to those Sunday services that follow the Revised Common Lectionary Gospel readings. We employ the SIFT approach (Sensing, Intuition, Feeling, and Thinking) to encourage reflection on the Sunday Gospel. We are suggesting a variety of ways in which people of all ages, and households working together, may engage with the Gospel reading and celebrate that engagement with shared activities.

Our invitation then is for you to share your reflections, prayers and photos of your creative work with the Cathedral by emailing them to smc.lesliefrancis@gmail.com.

These materials have been developed by the Canon Theologian of Liverpool Cathedral working in collaboration with the staff team here at the Cathedral, and with sponsorship and support from the St Mary's Centre in Wales.



The scripture quotations contained in these materials are taken from the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible, Anglicised Edition, copyright 1989 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America, and is used with permission. All rights reserved.

Copyright © Leslie J. Francis, 2024
Canon Theologian Liverpool Cathedral
with sponsorship and support from
St Mary's Centre, Wales