

When it was evening, the disciples came to him and said, “This is a lonely place, and the day is now over; send the crowds away to go into the villages and buy food for themselves.” Jesus said, “They need not go away; you give them something to eat.” They said to him, “We have only five loaves here and two fish.”

## Waiters and waitresses

### Adapted from Meeting Jesus in the Gospels by George Martin

We can focus on the miraculous character of this story, on it foreshadowing the Eucharist or the deeper dimension. As with the disciples we too are instructed to feed those who are hungry, even if we think that what we have is inadequate or not enough.

Food in Scripture is often a symbol for divine providence, gratitude, physical nourishment, and spiritual nourishment. As Vincentians we are asked to offer nourishment to all those who need our help, this may well be food but often times it is much more. We are asked to distribute the food of God’s Word, making available the Bread of life (John 6:35). As Vincentians and in the footsteps of St Vincent de Paul we accept the call of Jesus to “feed my lambs... Tend my sheep...Feed my sheep” (John 21:15-17). We do this by **love in action and hospitality** with simplicity, humility, gentleness, selflessness, and zeal (passion).

When Jesus asks his followers to feed the crowd , he is asking them to become waiters and waitresses, just as he describes himself “ *For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one at the table? But I am among you as one who serves.*” Luke 22:27. Jesus asks us to imitate his example, to become waiters and waitresses, to be channels of God’s love. As waiters we do not prepare or even decide upon what is served we just serve when needed. As Vincentians we simply distribute what God has given us, whether that is physical assistance, emotional support, spiritual nourishment – whatever matches up with the hunger of those we are called to serve, whatever has been placed on our tray to carry to our companions and community.

Being a waiter or waitress in the time of Jesus was not an exalted calling, yet it is the calling of Jesus himself. As Jesus did not judge those in need nor do we judge or chose who God places in our care. True hospitality is welcoming the strange, the poor, widow, orphan or anyone in need.

Reflection:

What is my calling?

What is the particular way in which I am asked to serve?