

**LENT IV 2008**  
**SERMON - CHRIST CHURCH PARISH**  
**FATHER JOHN ALTBERG**  
**JOHN 6.1 JEREMIAH 31.25**



**JEREMIAH THE PROPHET LIVED ABOUT 600 YEARS BEFORE JESUS...**things in Israel were in a mess...5 different Kings ruled Judah during Jeremiah's life...Egypt and Persia (now Iran) struggled for leadership...ultimately Judah was overrun by the Babylonians. One can readily conclude history repeats patterns!

Jeremiah said things WILL get better..."the Lord said...I will refresh those who are weary and will satisfy with food everyone who is weak from hunger.

Take heart...refreshment DID arrive and survives still for those willing to partake. Today's Gospel is the story of Jesus providing refreshment for a crowd of several (5K+) thousand. In another context, I of call today "Lighten Up" as the rigors of the Lenten season give way the day seems a little lighter...rose vestments replace somber purple on this ROSE SUNDAY...another name by which today is known.

Taking a lead from the Gospel, as the early church developed in Rome it was customary for the Pope to go into the streets and distribute bread to the poor on this Sunday...emblematic of what Jesus did as he concluded his Galilean period.

Think about matter of refreshment...how do you allow God work in your life to refresh and restore you...in turn, what are you doing to refresh and restore others...?

Feeding thousands, recorded in all four Gospels is the apex of Jesus revealing to people who he is...Jesus kept telling them...the Pharisees kept getting more and more nervous as they saw their world challenged and unraveling.

Today we carry on that legacy of feeding. Both liturgically and in what we do for others. The Pharisees have gone out of business but their legacy remains too...there are new forces that want Jesus to go away...they want the Church to go away. Just like their predecessors, Jesus apparently makes them nervous. Any references to God should, they manipulatively posture, be eradicated. Their arguments and methods have become more sophisticated but the goal is the same...**GET RID OF GOD!**

The concept, **GET RIGHT WITH GOD**, is dismissed by so-called sophisticated thought as arcane and simplistic. Current critics taken on the mantle of the Pharisees..."THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE" say they...

Remain vigilant AND resistant...but DO NOT panic! During a recent lunch at Saul's, a favorite Berkeley delicatessen, three Jewish friends and I discussed how, in an everyday manner, disliking God's approach was and is displayed...it's not a new concept. The Hebrews put God 'on hold' while wandering circuitously through the desert 1300 years before Jesus. The Romans and Pharisees handily collaborated to 'fix the Jesus problem.' Extremists today lay siege to the very mention of God under the guise of separation of Church and State. Though since the time of Jesus a plethora of Godless governments have gone out of business, there is a persistent resistance to what God wants FOR his people...some is subtle, some characterized by unrelenting hatred.

Incessant attacks on the Church and efforts to secularize the world, challenging though they are, WILL continue to be overcome as long as Catholic Christianity does not stray from its course.

We remain, two thousand years after Jesus fed thousands...refreshed by Word AND Sacrament. We have found out who Jesus is, what he came to do and how he drew us together so that we might be constantly sustained. We'll take up the rest of the story as the balance of Lent plays out.

Jesus made a promise when he fed 5000 people on that day, just as Jeremiah predicted. We continue to receive the same refreshment and a better, more ordered life now combined with the ultimate promise...eternal life.

