

# Sunday Homily

## EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

25 JULY 2021

YEAR B

“He looked up and saw a large crowd  
coming towards him.”

John 6:5

### Illustration

Towards the end of the film of *The Railway Children*, from the book written in 1906, by Edith Nesbit, the young people hurry through the countryside to the railway station, wondering at some momentous event which they suspect is in the offing. When the train comes to a standstill, through the steam issuing from the engine, they see a figure standing alone. Roberta, the eldest child, can hardly believe her eyes. After all this long time without him... there he is... she hurls herself along the platform shouting, “Daddy...!” All her dreams had come to fruition, her faith rewarded, all her anxieties could be put aside. There he was, at last, her Daddy. No more need to worry about him and his fate, and their family’s future. They would be together again. Her mother would no longer be lonely, the little children no longer lost without him and Roberta herself would feel secure. Daddy would make their lives complete, he would ensure that they never went hungry again and fill the empty space that his absence had created in their hearts and in their lives. In spite of his long absence, he had not forgotten them.

### Gospel Teaching

The people of Israel longed for the Messiah to come, but expected only prophets, because they were all that God had sent to them so far. But how could the Messiah come when the Romans inhabited the land God had given them? Elisha had provided for God’s people through miraculous actions. Numerous other prophets had drawn the people back to God when other diversions had arisen and they had taken other paths, mostly leading to conflict and pain. In this period of cruel occupation people had run to John the Baptist for reassurance and evidence that God had not forgotten his people, but then John was killed.

To whom could they turn, but to the man who seemed so much more than just another prophet? Here was one who could rescue the diseased from their ailments, who offered reassurance of God’s love for them and security to those rejected by the religious authorities as unfit for Temple worship. And Jesus fed them. He fed their minds with the truth, fed their hearts with the compassion he preached and lived, and fed their bodies with nourishment created by a miracle.

They ran to this man expecting a prophet as of old but, because they were prepared to believe, they received the gifts which only God could give them. This was the God whom Jesus referred to as his Father, and who then proved through Jesus that he was indeed the Father of all. Later, with his friends, Jesus would also demonstrate his power over the elements of water, time and space, but the crowd would not be present then. But for the time being they had received what they needed: the reassurance that, in spite of all that had gone before and the present burden of foreign invasion, God had not forgotten them. Their continuing faith had brought this man to them and his availability to them in their dire need was their proof.

## Application

Where do we find our comfort, our reassurance, in these days of increasing secularism and continuing conflict? We now know more about God than the crowds fed by Jesus because our knowledge is filtered through the wonder of the resurrection. We know what God is really like because Jesus told us and showed the extent of God's love for us in all of his actions. Jesus told us to call his Father "Abba", which means "Daddy". No longer is God to be the stern and authoritarian patriarch of the ancient times, one who filled the world with awe and anxiety. God became the Father upon whose knee the insecure might find comfort, the weary would find rest and the hungry would be fed from his hand. While remaining the Lord of all creation, in majesty and power, God demonstrated a loving parenthood more encompassing than anything we could even imagine, bending to earth to nurture the little and the lost and give hope to all who turn their faces heavenwards.

Since Jesus, we are no longer alone. Our strength comes not only from bread, hope and guesswork. We have seen the face of God, and the actions of the Almighty, in the person of Jesus. To know him is to know the extent of God, to have the totality of God and the kingdom of heaven among us.