

MONDAY

2 MAY

Philip and James,
Apostles

Isaiah 30:15-21

Psalm 119:1-8

Ephesians 1:3-10

John 14:1-14

TUESDAY

3 MAY

Acts 7:51 – 8:1a

Psalm 31:1-5. 16

John 6:30-35

WEDNESDAY

4 MAY

Acts 8:1b-8

Psalm 66:1-6

John 6:35-40

THURSDAY

5 MAY

Acts 8:26-end

Psalm 66:7-8. 14-
end

John 6:44-51

FRIDAY

6 MAY

Acts 9:1-20

Psalm 117

John 6:52-59

SATURDAY

7 MAY

Acts 9:31-42

Psalm 116:10-15

John 6:60-69

REFLECTION

As I was praying once, I sensed that something large had been placed in my hands. A voice said, "What do you see in your hands?" I looked and answered, "A large, round, loaf of bread." The voice returned, "Feed the people." Curiously, within two days, a lady who had started work in a bakery appeared at my door with three large loaves of bread. "I thought these might be of use to someone in the parish," she said.



When Jesus said, "I am the bread of life," as he does in Tuesday's reading from John's Gospel, he wasn't setting the Church up to be a universal food bank, but neither is physical sustenance excluded. The feeding of the five thousand met a real physical need. Yet primarily it was an opportunity for spiritual and moral teaching – food for the soul.

On that occasion Jesus told his disciples, "You give them something to eat" – and they did, distributing the bread broken by Jesus. For us today the message is the same: to go out to people, bearing and offering the life-changing presence of Christ. Try repeating this prayer: "Lord, you are the bread of life. Send me to feed your people."

PRAYER

Risen Christ,
you filled your disciples with boldness and fresh hope.
Strengthen us to proclaim your risen life
and fill us with your peace,
to the glory of God the Father.

GREAT PREACHERS

PART II – HILDEGARD
OF BINGEN (1098-1179)

Last week we saw how Martin Luther King used both sermons and speeches to call for equality in the name of Jesus. Ironically, now that inclusive language is increasingly preferred, it jars to hear Doctor King speaking of Christians as "sons of God," and even the word "person" is often accompanied by masculine pronoun – he, him, his.

Nevertheless, we've come a long way since the twelfth century, when Hildegard of Bingen (perhaps best known today for her groundbreaking music) achieved fame as a travelling preacher. Even though evidence suggests that in the earliest centuries of Christianity some women were not only preachers but priests, by Hildegard's time the Church had surrendered to societal pressure and instituted a male-only priesthood.

A product of her age, Hildegard even referred to herself as a member of "the weaker sex," while demonstrating that despite her often difficult health she was far from weak.

Here she was, then, not only preaching to men, but chastising the clergy for idleness and corruption, even accurately foretelling that this would eventually lead to the dissolution of the monasteries and the seizure of church wealth.

How did Hildegard earn approval for her preaching ministry? As an abbess (of a convent she founded at Rupertsberg, near Bingen in present-day Germany) she was allowed to preach to her sisters, although not at Sunday Mass. But she was a true visionary in many senses (her passion for the environment was centuries ahead of its time). She received papal blessing, both for her visions, which were deemed authentic, and for her vocation to speak about them and apply them to the Church and the world. She even went on preaching tours, like a twelfth-century female Billy Graham or John Wesley. Of course we have no access to recordings of Hildegard's sermons, but we can guess from her writings how powerfully they were delivered.

LIVE
the WORDSUSTAINING YOU
THROUGH THE WEEKEdited by
Caroline Hodgson
and
Heather Smith

Blessed Hildegard von Bingen

Third week of Easter

Monday 2 May to
Saturday 7 May
2022

WEEK

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