

*We Respond*

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**ENTRANCE ANTIPHON** (or a hymn) O God, come to my assistance; O Lord, make haste to help me! You are my rescuer, my help; O Lord, do not delay.

**RESPONSORIAL PSALM** (Ps 69)

**ANTIPHON:** The hand of the Lord feeds us: he answers all our needs.

**RESPONSE:** The hand of the Lord feeds us: he answers all our needs.

**LECTOR:** The Lord is kind and full of compassion, slow to anger, abounding in love.

How good is the Lord to all, compassionate to all his creatures. **R.**

**LECTOR:** The eyes of all creatures look to you and you give them their food in due time.

You open wide your hand, grant the desires of all who live. **R.**

**LECTOR:** The Lord is just in all his ways and loving in all his deeds. He is close to all who call him, call on him from their hearts **R.**

**GOSPEL ACCLAMATION** Alleluia, alleluia! No one lives on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God. Alleluia!

**COMMUNION ANTIPHON** (or a hymn) You have given us, O Lord, bread from heaven, endowed with all delights and sweetness in every taste.

or

I am the bread of life, says the Lord; whoever comes to me will not hunger

and whoever believes in me will not thirst.

**TODAY'S READINGS** Is 55:1-3; Rom: 8:35; 37-39; Mat 14: 13-21

**NEXT WEEK** (19th Sunday, Year A) 1 Kings 19: 9, 11-13; Ps 84; Rom 9: 1-5; Mt 14:22-33

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*Does God  
answer our  
prayers?*



2 August 2020 18th Sunday, Year A

During the devastating bushfires Australia suffered this past summer, lives were lost and many homes and flora and fauna were destroyed.

Amid this destruction, many people turned to prayer. In this respect, today's readings offer comfort in the form of a reassurance that God's love is enduring. Paul goes so far as to reassure his Roman congregants that "nothing can separate us" from the love of God made visible in Christ – "neither death, nor life," no matter how bad things may appear in the present or future. The Psalmist similarly reassures the Israelites that "the Lord is near to all who call upon him".

But others may not be comforted by these words of encouragement and hope. Such people are tempted to reject the notion that prayer can be efficacious. For many caught between these two reactions, there is a real crisis of faith. Why did God not prevent these terrible fires?

The stark reality suggests that God does not answer our prayers for immediate and direct intervention. The key to unlocking this conundrum is found in today's gospel.

At the end of long day of preaching and teaching, the disciples ask Jesus to send the hungry crowds home so that they can eat and rest. Jesus responds by telling his disciples to minister to their needs out of

their own resources.

Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of the devastating fires was the overwhelming charity and support offered to those affected by their fellow citizens and by people from across the globe. Volunteers rushed to help; community organisations partnered with governments to offer sustenance and practical care. People across the world united to agitate for change in our relationship with nature.

The impetus for this response comes from the values and morals of a society that has shaped over millennia by the Judeo-Christian tradition, which stresses the central importance of building societies based on a respect for human dignity and justice.

God may not always answer our prayers by acting directly or even miraculously to avert an immediate threat to our lives. But God has acted and continues to act preemptively through inspiration and revelation to shape and build a capacity for charity and love into the hearts of humans.

God respects both the integrity of human beings and the integrity of natural processes. God works in and through those two processes, the human and the natural, to bring about tangible change in our relationships with one another and with nature.

Ian J Elmer  
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