



BENEDICTINE SISTERS OF CHICAGO

18th Sunday in Ordinary Time

August 2, 2026

Sr. Susan Quaintance

Is 55: 1-3

Ps 145: 8-9, 15-16, 17-18

Rom 8: 35, 37-39

Mt 14: 13-21

What will separate me from the love of Christ? Will national division, frustration, anger, boredom, pessimism, self-centeredness, or worry? Though that's not the list that Paul gives in Romans 8:37, it's the list I made of some of the things that threatened to separate me from the love of Christ this week. They did not, but that says way more about the power of Christ's love than my faith.

We've been hearing Romans at Sunday liturgies for the past seven Sundays, and specifically Romans 8 since July 5th. Romans 8 has always been a favorite, but lately it has taken on even deeper resonance. We've heard: "I consider that the sufferings of the present time are as nothing compared with the glory to be revealed for us. For creation awaits with eager expectation the revelation of the children of God." "We know that all creation is groaning in labor pains." "But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait with endurance." "We do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit itself intercedes with inexpressible groanings." "We know that all things work for good for those who love God."

What we hear today is the glorious culmination of this rhetorical work of art and source of spiritual comfort. "For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor present things, nor future things, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."

What Paul fails to mention is that I have the power to separate myself from the love of Christ. It's a boneheaded thing to do yet I let it happen far too often. To recap: national division, frustration, anger, boredom, pessimism, self-centeredness, and worry do not have the power to separate me from the power of Christ, but this week I let them keep me from claiming who I am and living into who I want to be as a person of faith.

However, in the face of that embarrassing truth, I have hope because of the example of my mother. She would have pooh-poohed being used as a theological exemplar, but it would have pleased her to be cited as someone who knew a lot about love. ("There's nothing worse than false modesty," she said. Often.) I grew up hearing the words "I love you" – with abundant variations – from my mother all the time. My father loved me just as much but expressed it in other ways. That's for another set of reflections. Though I would pay a million dollars to hear Mom say it today, there were decades when her declarations would be me with this face . . . from me. Though this, too, is kind of boneheaded, I don't lose much sleep over it because she could be a lot, and I was – for at least one of those decades – an adolescent. My face did not, in fact, freeze that way, and everything turned out in the end.

Despite my gritted teeth and rolled eyes, I learned what it was like to be loved with an unbreakable and indomitable love. And because I am blessed beyond what is right or reasonable, a few other people have loved me like that, too. Those experiences have given me a glimpse of the kind of love that God has for me. And you. And strangers. And the people who really bug us. I so hope and pray that every person in this chapel has had one or two or five experiences like that. Because they teach about mystery and transformation and sacrifice and unselfishness. They teach about the utterly unlikely extravagance that results in twelve baskets of leftovers in the gospel. They teach about the love of God.

What will separate me from the love of Christ? Only I have that power. But I'm going to try not to use it.