

## Field Hospital Food: Introduction and Overview

In his interview with Jesuit journals in the Summer of last year Pope Francis famously described “the church as a field hospital after battle.” The image captures some of the urgency that is demanded of the church today: “You have to attend to the wounds,” he continued. “Then we can talk about everything else. Attend to the wounds! Attend to the wounds! ... Begin with the basics.” [*La Civiltà Cattolica* 19.09.13]

*Field Hospital Food* is a beginning with the basics. It is a way of offering the food that is God’s word to people who are hungry—hungry for a word that satisfies, that nourishes, that consoles, that brings hope.

The situation of the Church in Ireland today is like that of the disciples faced by the crowds in the desert: they came to Jesus and said to him, “it is late in the day; send the crowds away, to go into the country and villages round about so they can buy themselves something to eat.” Jesus’ response was that *the disciples* should give them to eat. So Jesus takes their five loaves and their two fish and blesses them, and the multitude is fed. (Mark 6:35–44) *Field Hospital Food* is our ‘five loaves and two fish’—the bit we have, all we can offer in our poverty.

*What’s Involved?* Gather two or three (or four or five) people around you. Take the given reading. Follow the GUIDE for the three stages—Hearing, Happening, Hoping. Let the Lord work through the space you create.

*I wouldn’t be able for this?* Remember the words of the Lord, “Wherever two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.” (Matt 18:20) This is not a Bible class; this is a listening to God’s word in faith—in simplicity, in trust, in openness. Remember you too may be hungry—we all seek God’s life-giving word.

*What is this trying to do?* *Field Hospital Food* is about permitting people to receive the nourishment and consolation God offers everyone.

*How will I know I’m on the right track?* By their fruits you shall know them! Do you see quiet? Searching? Reading? Listening? Listening to the word, Listening FOR the word, Listening for a word, Listening to others around them? Do you have a genuine prayer of your own? Do you or others tell the Lord your hopes? Are you moving beyond performance to prayer?

*How long does this take?* How long does a meal take? Sometimes we rush, sometimes we linger! Hearing and hoping take time. It takes time for us to hear the actual words of a Scripture passage. It takes time for us to hear beyond those words—to hear the word within the word. It takes time for others to speak. It takes time to wait for others and with them. It takes time to savour the HOPE God’s word can bring to us. To hope is not to lose touch with reality; to hope is to trust that what seems impossible may be possible in God’s time. It takes time to trust that the Lord is in our lives.

*But seriously, how much time would I need?* Normally between 40 and 60 minutes. Sometimes, a little more, but never more than 75 minutes.

*Where can I go for support?* Remember Jesus who took the few loaves the disciples had and fed the crowd. The greatest support is the desire of people to hear a word of life. To paraphrase Pope Francis, “Attend to the immediate! Begin with the basics!” The basics are our lives, our experience, the people around us. If you still need more, have a look at [www.tarsus.ie](http://www.tarsus.ie).

*Remember the Widow’s Mite!* Unlike the rich who contributed from what they had left over, the widow “out of her need, put in everything she had—her whole living” (Mark 14:44). Giving in our poverty creates the space for God to speak and to act. Faith means trusting he can and will.