

18th (QA&SJ) Sunday in Ordinary Time Year A

We come up with the best reasons to skirt blame or point fingers at someone else. If your children are brats without manners you blame the internet or mass media. If a friend is shot by a madman you blame the gun manufacturer. Peace and order problems—police negligence. Calamity—acts of God. Moral degradation—the church is neglectful. Corruption—*who else to blame but the politicians? The disciples are in this finger-pointing mode too.* The people have no food—*send them home; let them get food for themselves.* But Jesus' order is short, clear and direct: "*Give them some food yourselves.*" This is what our readings are demonstrating this Sunday—the God, in Jesus, indeed has great concern for us. The life and mission of Jesus is revealed as a God who comes, embraces and immerses himself in our humanness. This is the mystery of God becoming man. Helping us realize how great is the love God has for us all. As St. Paul said, "*Nothing could separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.*"

The story of the "*multiplication of the bread*", which is found in all four gospels, highlights our understanding about Jesus. It shows his intense compassion: "*When He saw the vast crowd, his heart was moved with pity for them, and he cured their sick.*" Had Jesus been a modern politician, perhaps the sentence would read: "*When he saw the vast crowd, his heart was filled with joy because he saw his prospective voters.*" But Jesus is different. He sees the needs of others rather than the

opportunity to secure some personal advantage. This pity for others is not a mere feeling, it moves him to action—he cures their sick and he later feeds the crowds. *When we see people do we look at their needs, or do we look for opportunities to promote our self-interests and exploit the situation for our benefit?* Although affected by grief upon learning of the death of John the Baptist, Jesus is moved by peoples’ needs. He made no excuses—He uses his heart to discern. Bleeding inside, he goes about curing many. The test of love is to love and to give not only when it is comfortable and convenient.

Jesus feels the burden of others. It could have been convenient for him and for his disciples to *“dismiss the crowds, so they can go and buy food for themselves.”* Instead He decided to feed them. *“Five loaves and two fish are all we have here.”* Again the disciples are trying to *avoid* responsibility. Jesus’ response is simple: *“Bring them here to me.”* Jesus is giving them food himself. The Lord believes we can do something. We can make a difference, give our share, contribute our talent, and help in our own simple ways. A man is praying and rebuking the Lord for all the problems in the world. He complains, *“Many people are starving, suffering and are victims of injustice. Why don’t you do something?”* The Lord answered, *I did. I created you!”*

Why do some people have too much and some have not enough? Greed... Some people are never satisfied. Jesus makes others feel they are wanted and much appreciated. Nothing is impossible with him. He

decided to use all that the people had to offer: *five loaves and two fish*. Jesus feels the need for people to eat and rest. He has the heart of a *'shepherd.'* And so he cures the sick among them and multiplies bread and fish to feed everyone. *He said the blessing, broke the loaves, and gave them to his disciples.*” This gesture of looking up to heaven is now a part of the consecration prayer of the Roman Canon. He will then *'break bread'*—give his body and blood—to satisfy our spiritual hunger. Just as Isaiah in our first reading invited his people, *“Come to the water all you who are thirsty, come to me heedfully, listen that you may have life.”* Today it is Jesus inviting us to partake in His banquet. His *'Eucharistic'* action of blessing, breaking the loaves and giving them to His disciples reminds us of what He had done at the last supper when he instituted the Eucharist.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church states that the Eucharist *“is an act of thanksgiving to God”* (CCC#1329). Indeed the entire Mass is a prayer of thanksgiving, which is stated explicitly in some prayers and implied throughout. The priest says, *“Let us give thanks to the Lord our God,”* and we reply, *“It is right and just.”* Certainly, this is also a moment for us to acknowledge and pray for the people who have been generous to us. *Take time to thank your parents, your siblings, your friends, your neighbors, your community leaders, or your priest.* One of the technical terms for Holy Eucharist is *'Mass'* *Missa* comes from the Latin verb *mittere*, *misi*, *missum* - to send away. Mass is a celebration

where we are sent away. Every week we come to the table of the Lord, *yet do we allow ourselves to be transformed by the Eucharist we receive?* Many complain, *“Father, I don’t get anything out of Mass.”* Here’s the best answer I learned, *“You have it backwards. You don’t come to Mass to get something. You come to Mass to give something, and that something is your thanks to our good and gracious God for the blessings that you have received.”*

Come quench your thirst and share in the banquet. Let us acknowledge this hunger and thirst, for God has provided the Eucharist to satisfy our longings... now is the moment to focus on that gift, live with it and share it. Amen!