

2 Easter Friday JN 6:1-15

This morning's gospel of the multiplication of the loaves and the fishes is one the most astonishing of all Jesus' miracles. It is a miracle that just goes to show you that in the narrow reckoning of men there is always a deficit, but in the arithmetic of God, there is always a surplus.

In the reckoning of men: Philip made a rapid calculation that it would take two hundred days' wages to give them each a mouthful. Jesus didn't ask Philip, "How much money will we need?" He asked him, "Where shall we get the bread?" Philip should have answered that He Who raised the dead and He Who healed the sick could surely supply the bread. Andrew pointed to a boy with some bread and fish and did a little arithmetic of his own. "But what good is that among so many?" In the reckoning of men, there is always a deficit.

In the Old Testament, God was always so pleased to use trivial and insignificant things to fulfill His purposes:

- ✓ a baby blanket that swaddled Moses to win the heart of Pharaoh's daughter,
- ✓ a shepherd's stick of Moses that worked miracles in Egypt,

✓ a slingshot that David brought to a Philistine sword fight.

Here, Jesus uses simple bread and simple fish and He works a miracle.

Yet in the narrow reckoning of men, there is always a deficit. As I was preparing this homily, I read a commentary written by a scripture scholar who in my estimation, seems to know about as much as Philip and Andrew. This is what he wrote:

It is not really to be thought that the crowd left on a nine-mile expedition without making any preparations at all. If there were pilgrims with them they would certainly possess supplies for the way. But it may be that none of them would produce what they had, for they selfishly - and very humanly - wished to keep it all for themselves. It may be then that Jesus, with that rare smile of His, produced the little store that He and His disciples had; with sunny faith He thanked God for it and shared it. And everyone, moved by Jesus' example, did the same. And in the end there was plenty.

That's crazy X. If everybody had brought ample food, there would be no dilemma in the first place. If everybody brought ample food, there would be no need to share for everyone would have had his own. What happened in this morning's gospel was an honest to God miracle; it was not an exercise in

sharing with a rare smile, a sunny faith and a skip in his step. And the reason why we know that it was a miracle is because not just John, but Mark, Matthew and Luke, who have little in common with each other, all tell the story. And they all tell the story of the multiplication of the loaves that day, and Jesus walking on the water that night, two miracles stories appearing back to back in all four gospels. Why? Because that's the way it happened. Jesus performed two miracles back to back that were so astonishing that all four gospel writers wrote it down, Mark a good 30 years after the fact, Matthew and Luke 50 years after it happened, John 55 years after the fact. In the narrow reckoning of men, there are still some like this scripture scholar who always come up with a deficit. But in the arithmetic of God, there is always a surplus.

In this pandemic, there are many whose arithmetic is coming up short, worried for their business, worried for their job, worried for their nest egg, worried for their investments. Just as we need to trust Our Blessed Lord with the health of our loved ones who have been diagnosed or are on the front lines treating those diagnosed, we need to leave the arithmetic up to God.

As your pastor, I have had my conversations with our

investors, that they remain as secure as possible. We are in frequent communication with the bank who is holding our PPP application and is ready to hit “send” once the portal is open. I have had my conversations with my staff, and I have had my conversations with our finance council. And my advice is and was that we need to make decisions that reflect who we are, men and women of faith, who trust in Our Blessed Lord’s arithmetic and not ours.

This miracle story of the multiplication of the loaves and fish is recorded just before one of John’s masterful discourses, John’s Discourse on the Bread of Life, where we get a very clear teaching on the Eucharist, Jesus’ miracle par excellence that recalls his passion, death and resurrection. That a priest can take mere bread and wine 2000 years after the fact and consecrate it into the Body and Blood of Christ is miraculous indeed, but it is only understood to those who know Christ is divine, that Christ can work miracles. In the reckoning of men there is always a deficit; in the arithmetic of God, there is always a surplus, and that surplus in the context of the Eucharist is nothing short of a miracle.