

18th Sunday in Ord. Time -- Aug. 1-2, 2020

The last few Sundays Jesus has spoken to us through parables about the kingdom of God. In the last parable we heard, Jesus spoke of the kingdom of God being like a net that gathers in all kinds of fish good and bad. We are familiar with fishing with a pole and when we pull in a fish we make a judgement or decision whether or not to keep it. But when God goes fishing with us he wants us to use a net because he wants to gather everyone in without judgement on our part but letting God alone make judgement at the **end** of the world.

Today's readings pick up on that same theme of God's generosity and openness to all.

One of the basic reasons we do not share our selves or our gifts as much as could is that we are worried that we will not have enough for ourselves. The true opposite to love is actually not hatred, as we might suppose, but rather fear. Fear of possibly being hurt, but also fear of not having enough for ourselves.

We are often like the disciples in today's Gospel who, as evening draws on, make a point of advising Jesus that he better dismiss the crowds so they can go off and buy themselves some food for supper. As one commentator sums it up – the disciples are operating from a place of scarcity, which is generally also our own basic concern --- will I or we have enough for ourselves or enough to share some with others?

However, today's readings all call us to let go of all such fears. --- In today's first reading, God, speaking through the prophet Isaiah, invites all who are hungry or thirsty to come to him and be satisfied. God has blessings to share with all who desire them, and there is no worry with God about God having enough to go around.

In today's Gospel – when Jesus says: “give them some food yourselves,” clearly there is not enough food to feed themselves much less this huge crowd..

Nevertheless, Jesus is unafraid. He blessed and distributed the small amount of food the disciples gave

him and after all have eaten there are twelve baskets left over.

In today's second reading, Paul also tells us not to fear – absolutely nothing can separate us from the protection and love of God. Our bond to Jesus cannot be broken by anything in this life or even by supernatural powers.

Today's readings call us to let go of all fear. We do not need to worry that there is enough to go around. We are protected and nourished by the infinite love of God. – As today's psalm says – “the hand of the Lord feeds us; he answers all our needs.”

Jesus' actions in today's Gospel reveal the abundance of God. Whereas the disciples want to send the crowd away to buy food for themselves --- this is not Jesus' way. Jesus' way is one of complete self-giving as we see in his life and death for us. And he continues to give himself to us and feed us with himself in the Eucharist here.

In the feeding of the multitude, Jesus is providing a model for his disciples and us to follow. In this miracle, Jesus is teaching the disciples and gets them involved. He asks them for the food that they have and then has them distribute the food so that they might experience the power that his grace can have in their actions.

The feeding of the multitude may not draw that much of our attention, but it is important to note that this miracle of feeding the multitude is told 6 times in the four gospels. The gospel writers, inspired by God, truly want us to get its message.

What is the message? It is simply this: **the purpose of our living is to help others to live.**

That is the way of God among us shown to us by Jesus. Jesus has come to serve and not to be served.

For us ourselves to live out something like the feeding of the multitude in our own life might seem rather frightening and overwhelming. Yet, if we think about it, we all know this way in our own lives. Couples

serve and lay down their lives for each other in marriage. Parents do the same with their families. Single persons reach out and help others in their lives. We live to help others to live.

And – at the heart of it all is the Eucharist which is pointed to by today's miracle. In the Eucharist, we are over and over offered the dying of Jesus as the pattern of his living and the model for us.

The question might be raised --- How much would it take to feed all the hungry people of the world? This question has two answers. -- First, not much at all. The Eucharist – the presence of Jesus among us—is all that we need to be fully nourished and satisfied. It is our identity, our gathering and our life. The Eucharist gives us all that we need spiritually. – Secondly, How much would it take to feed the many hungers of the world? -- It would take all that we have.

In today's world, who will feed the hungry? It is those who are nourished with Christ in the Eucharist. That's who. We tend to think that the government will do it, or that someone else will step in before the people starve. However, when we receive Holy Communion we become the body of Christ for today's world, and in God, there is somehow always enough to go around and some left over.

Under God's care, which is reassured for us in each Eucharist, fear more and more melts away, leaving behind only love and desire to serve God and our neighbor. Those who are hungry in the world are waiting for us to get going.

As we end each Mass we are sent out to share what we have. The seed of God's word should be sown everywhere. The weeds should not be pulled up yet. The net should be allowed to gather in all.

Nourished and encouraged by the Eucharist – God's Word and Holy Communion – we go in peace and without fear to love and serve the Lord.