

Reading: [Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time | USCCB](#)

The church lit up with faithful rushing in for Christmas eve mass. The architecture of the church was traditional, similar to St. Anthony's chapel; the body of the church was rectangle with long wooden pews laid out in two columns from front to the back. Stained glass windows dressed the walls in two tiers, one set at eye level, another set running high above near the high sealings, but they were not in full splendor since it was already dark out.

The mood inside was warm, inviting, festive with people dressed to impress as they planned to head over to Christmas eve dinners after mass. With the gaze following the marble columns that ran along the sides, you were led to rest your eyes on the sanctuary, elevated by two sets of steps. There stood four very tall natural Christmas trees against the back, lit with white lights, serving as a beautiful backdrop to the altar, tabernacle and giant crucifix. The marble floor reflected the whites and reds of the poinsettias.

Everything in there spoke of God. Everything signaled to God's existence; in the community gathered, in the faces of the children exited for the next morning, in the beauty of the Church, in the tabernacle...

There sat a young man, age 18 about 10 pews from the front, and all he could do was stare at the wick of one of the candles set above the altar. Oblivious to everything else around him. He did what he had been doing for weeks at Sunday mass... he prayed: “***Please, God... if you exist... give me proof... do anything, I will take any indication... please God, if you exist, make the flame of this candle flicker, better yet, blow it out.***” And like every other time he had prayed for this very same thing, nothing happened, the flame simply swayed ever gently to the movement of the air.

You see, this young man had had an encounter with Jesus a few years earlier when he was 16 and went to a charismatic retreat... there he learned that Jesus could do great things, and that was so attractive for him. He got involved, went to retreat after retreat, heard testimonies of how Jesus changed lives, liked to hear about miracles, even witnessed some strange supernatural occurrences of people praying in tongues and giving revelations about others... he even had what he considered a few supernatural experiences himself, which just led to his curious eagerness to follow Jesus to see more, to experience more, to receive more... always eager to see what else Jesus could do... ***until it was not enough...***

Over time, the young man would see nothing new, experience nothing new, receive nothing new... he would follow Jesus, kept going to every retreat, but they now seemed all same... *it was not enough*... maybe there was nothing else and it had all just been in his head... so that Christmas eve he would give it one of his lasts attempts as he prayed: “*please, give me something new, please, if you are real, give me a sign, please, make the flame of this candle flicker.*” Would it flicker? Stay tuned...

Have you ever felt like things are not enough? “Why yes, every morning! I get up and think “I didn’t get enough sleep!” I hear ya... Maybe you look at your bank account and think “Gosh, I don’t have enough money...” The busy day goes by and you realize you still have lots to do and think “there are not enough hours in a day!” At the drive through you look into your bag of deliciousness and think “they didn’t give me enough napkins!” so you resort to whipping your greasy fingers on your thighs or the bottom of your car seat if it’s fabric (no? no one else does that?... yea neither do I...) We always notice when we don’t have enough.

Some sociologists suggest that instinctively we are always looking for more, for bounty, we are wired to recognize when we are running low on something so that we can then go on the move and get more... part of our hunter/gatherer origins

which is good because it helps our survival when it comes to meeting our basic needs. The problem comes when we have enough, but enough is no longer enough... that is where greed comes in... and we end up being consumed by the desire for more.

We run into the same temptation when it comes to our search for God. Is that not why people flocked to Jesus? *A large crowd followed him, because they saw the signs he was performing on the sick.* People had many needs, physical, emotional, spiritual, and kept looking for more because what they had around them was not enough... As they hear about Jesus, they come to him in great numbers. Some wanted to be healed, others just wanted to see miracles... they all wanted more...

Isn't this the reason most people go to God today? Many people turn to God in times of struggle, in times of pain and need... when something shakes our foundation... Others come through curiosity: if God is so great and powerful and can do so many things... I wonder what God can do for me... what I can get out of that... we seek God when we don't have enough and want more...

This might not be the right motivation, it is rather selfish and out of self-interest, but it is a start, and God works with that, doesn't reject it.

When Jesus raised his eyes and saw that a large crowd was coming to him, he didn't get on the boat again as before to seek peace and quiet, he didn't tell the disciples to tell them to come back tomorrow... he said to Philip, "where can we buy enough food for them to eat?"

You know, people didn't go there to have a picnic... they didn't go there for lunch, nowhere does it say that people were hungry, they were there to see signs...

Jesus knew it, he knew what people wanted to see... he could have easily spent the rest of the day performing many signs and miracles to feed their need for more... but he doesn't... he knows that what they really need is different, and asks Philip a question to find out if he saw what he saw, or if he thought just like everyone else.

Philip responded, "two hundred days' wages worth of food would *not be enough?*" That is a very specific calculation... Philip must have thought it through, must have done an estimate of the people, did the math, and concluded: yep, not enough! We don't have enough! He did not see what Jesus saw.

So very patiently Jesus continues, gives them instructions on what to do, and by the end of the day, ends up feeding people not only with enough food, but with an abundance that there were twelve baskets left.

Jesus recognized that their need to see miracles, for healing, for more, was a hunger for God... and by doing this miracle, Jesus is wanting them to stop searching for more, and to realize HE IS ENOUGH.

There is so much richness here, so much symbolism. As Catholics, the Eucharistic reference is so clear... people sit, Jesus takes the bread, gives thanks, then gives them to the disciples who then distribute to everyone... then there are twelve baskets left, symbolizing the twelve tribes of Israel, further meaning that the bread will always be available for all peoples in all generations through the Church...

People came searching for more, to see to be entertained, to be healed, but Jesus gives them something different, *himself*, and says, this is more than enough... ***I am more than enough. Stop thinking about God like you think about everything else... otherwise I will never be enough for you... and just as easy as you flocked to me, you will leave.***

As Catholics we interpret what Jesus gave them to be the Eucharist. Being so, when you come to mass, do you feel like you get enough? If Jesus is fully present in the Eucharist, and the eucharist really does what it promises to do and St. Paul affirms: unites us in one body, one spirit, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one

God... if it transforms us to be like Jesus gives us eternal life: then have we come to the recognition that that is more than enough? Or do we leave feeling empty, indifferent, wanting more...

When we don't understand the Eucharist properly, then it is only a matter of time when we search for God elsewhere. I'm sure many of you have family or friends who left the Church for another one where the music is better, where the sermons are better... or they left faith all together because they didn't find what they were looking for, when Jesus in the Eucharist was not enough.

Over the next five weeks we will continue to read from John 6, this long bread of life discourse. It will give us an opportunity to deepen our understanding of the Eucharist so that we can renew our affirmation that yes, Jesus, you are enough, something not always easy to say.

Christmas eve mass ended, families took their selfies in front of the nativity scene and walked out until I was the only one left inside that church, now as dark and empty as I felt inside, feeling like I needed more. "God... if you exist, *light* that candle, please, give me a miracle, do something, give me a sign!"

That candle never flickered or lit that evening, and I am glad it didn't because the unexpected encounter with Jesus that I would have months later would change it

all... an encounter that made me exclaim, *Jesus, you are enough!* So, What happened? Stay tuned...

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