

Eighteenth Sunday

Isaiah 55:1-3; Romans 8:35, 37-39; Mt 14:13-21

Today we celebrate the miracle of the multiplication of loaves and fish. It is a great story. With only a few loaves and fish, Jesus fed great crowds of people in a place where food was inaccessible and accommodation scarce.

We are told there were five thousand mouths to feed, and that was only counting the men, it didn't include the women and children. Numbers never seem to bother Jesus. "**Bring me the bread and fish,**" he told his disciples. And he multiplied it to the extent that there was more than enough for everyone there. The leftovers filled twelve baskets.

Yes, it is a miraculous story. To be sure, the miracle of the multiplication reveals to us God's great power. Who else could do these great and mighty things but God? Indeed, the power and glory of God are greater than we can even imagine. What great miracles God is able to do!

On the other hand, the fact that God can do such great miracles like the multiplication of the loaves and fish can be a little embarrassing for modern believers. For with the exception of Vatican-approved miracles for sainthood, God does not seem to be performing such miracles today, at least not in these days of COVID-19.

"If God is all-powerful, compassionate, deeply caring, and loving us so much," goes the complaint, "if Jesus was able to perform miracles for people back then, why isn't he doing so today?"

If Jesus cured all those people in his day, why isn't he doing so in ours? If he fed all those thousands of people with very little to start with, why doesn't he feed our starving today?

Why doesn't he provide homes for our homeless and clothes for those who have nothing but rags to wear? Why does he continue to permit sickness, diseases, catastrophes pandemics to ravage the world? Where are the signs of God's loving care in our lives? Why isn't he solving my own personal problems, answering all my prayers?"

Personally, I sometimes wonder about the urgent situations facing our families and world because of the spread of the deadly coronavirus

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and its profound affects for years to come. But never do I doubt the Lord and his love for us. Jesus, the Son of God, came into the world, not to do away with the human condition. In fact, he took on our human frailty to make it work for our benefit.

He experienced the pain and suffering, the problems and frustrations, the disappointments and failures, the loneliness and abandonment, the broken hearts and sadness that are part of our human existence, including our many joys and happiness.

When these human conditions are lived in the right spirit, the Holy Spirit, it will all merit us an unending life with God and solidarity with one another. Put simply - God is good to us - and most of us know it. He suffered and died on the cross for us and unendingly provides us **“food for the eternal life.”** (cf. John 6: 51) We believe Holy Communion is all about that. And we know what it means.

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ:

Though the multiplication of the loaves was to show God’s love and concern for us, it was mainly meant as a symbol of the Eucharistic feeding Jesus would provide. Jesus was to become bread and feed our souls with himself.

Think of our own parishioners, family members and friends who “view” Mass at home because of today’s health concern. How truly their souls must be, longing for the bread of life, the spiritual nourishment that Jesus has baked for them in the oven of His passion!

Think of thousands, perhaps millions of others who hunger for love, for kindness, for compassion, for understanding. Those in care homes, those in isolation, those in crisis, all long for the **“true food”**, that is our goodness, generosity, openness, and kindness of others.

Just as Jesus told his disciples, **“There is no need for them to go away; give them some food yourselves.”** So, should we. And the reason we do what Jesus asks of us is because the things of God can never run out. They are limitless, unbounded, overflowing beyond our wildest imagination. And our loving God gives these things freely to us

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- things we call gifts and blessings - and he simply asks that we turn around and shower others with those same things.

My friends, in a very real sense, when God challenges us to be more than we are today, or do something remarkable, he's not asking the impossible. He's asking things of us that he knows are absolutely possible - because that's how he made us and because he will be the one providing every good thing. All we need to do is pass it on, pay it forward.

Indeed, the miracle of the loaves and fish may have happened a long time ago. But we can share in that miracle in so many ways and in so many circumstances. So many people are in need. So let's allow God to “**multiply**” the bread and fish and “**perform**” his miracles through us, and thereby transform our society and world.