



JULY 25, 2021 | 17<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

## HOLY FAMILY PARISH

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## Give, Multiply, and Share!

If you died today what would you be leaving behind? I don't mean money or any other material possession; I mean for what would people remember you? Would someone, somewhere, say this man or woman amazingly touched my life? Would someone spare a tear for you because you gave him or her a reason to live?

The ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ could be said to be that of touching and transforming lives. He preached the word of God to hungry souls, he healed the sick, he raised the dead and, in the Gospel today (John 6:1-15), Jesus sets out to feed a multitude (five thousand men, excluding women and children) with five loaves of bread and two fish. For Jesus Christ, it was all about multiplying and sharing for both the spiritual and the physical needs of the people.

### THE BACKGROUND

The Gospel Reading today has a serial connection with the Gospel of last Sunday which tells about the return of the apostles from their mission and how a multitude of people came in search of Jesus and the apostles. The pilgrimage to Jesus Christ was so overwhelming that the apostles had no time to eat as they set out attending to the spiritual needs of the people.

Last Sunday, our Lord Jesus Christ saw them as sheep without a shepherd, and he set out teaching them

many things. After feeding them with the food of the soul, he discovers this Sunday again that they are like a famished herd of sheep and he decides to supply them with solid food to nourish the body. The First Reading (2 Kings 4:42-44) tells us about the feeding of a hundred prophets with twenty barley loaves through the prayers of Elisha the prophet.

### PHILIP, ANDREW, THE BOY WITH BREAD & FISH, AND THE MAN FROM BAAL-SHALISHA

To feed a crowd of people in the magnitude of five thousand and more today would require the efforts of several fast food outlets put together with extremely efficient waiters. In this context, however, they had nothing, and Jesus says to Philip, "Where can we buy enough food for them to eat?" But this was a test as the narrative tells us as Jesus knew what he was going to do.

Philip gives an honest answer by stating that two hundred days' salary would still be insufficient to give them a little food. Philip's answer indicates that they could not feed the crowd. Philip failed the Lord's test which is the test of faith, the test of believing that there could be a possibility in the face of impossibility. Philip only needed to say "Lord, we can have more than enough, just tell us what to do."

As the test was going on Andrew,

who seems to be a close friend of Philip, enters the discussion with a faith-inspiring suggestion, "There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish; but what good are these for so many?" Andrew represents faith and hope amid hopelessness and faithlessness. Andrew was right; God does not need so much to do so much; He instead needs something from you no matter how little (Mark 11:22).

At this point, we turn to the boy with the five barley loaves and two fish. The Gospel writers did not tell us the name of the boy in question, which is very instructive for us in this reflection. Names are significant in all the stories in the Bible, and when we do not have a name attached to a character, it means that there is a potential moral or spiritual engagement with the reader. In this instance, the boy represents all of us.

The most exciting thing about the boy is his willingness to give away his five barley loaves of bread and two fish. Jesus performs the miracle of the feeding of the multitude, but the desire of the unnamed boy to share his bread and fish makes it timely. More than five thousand people eat and have enough because someone in that crowd is willing to share.

The miracle of the multiplication could happen because a little boy made a selfless donation. It is vital for us to know that the boy in question

did not give because he was expecting the miracle of multiplication. His willingness to let go of what he had was for a useful purpose, and from that donation, everyone had enough.

The donation of the five barley loaves and two fish in the Gospel Reading resonates with the gift of twenty barley loaves from a man from Baal-Shalishah to Elisha. The gift turned out to be an excellent meal for a hundred prophets when the prophet Elisha prayed for divine multiplication. Again, we learn here that giving leads to multiplication and extends to sharing.

### LESSONS ON GIVING, MULTIPLICATION, AND SHARING

The greatest enemy you may often confront in life is yourself. We are often so overwhelmed by the self that we think little about others. Our excessive emphasis on ourselves is part of the failure of our spiritual growth. Giving is one of the ways of getting out of ourselves and reaching out to others.

The secret of giving is that it increases the giver (Prov. 11:24). Luke 6:38 says, “Give and it will be given to you. A good measure pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap...” A pertinent question one could ask is: what is the “it” that would be given to the giver? The answer is simple—what the giver gives would be multiplied. In another place, the Bible tells us that givers never lack (Prov. 28:27).

### MOVING FORWARD

The message today is not really

about the power of God to perform miracles in our lives; every day is a miracle from God, and we are living testimonies of divine miracles. The core of today’s message is about compassionate giving and sharing. There is an invitation to us to follow the examples of our merciful Savior Jesus Christ and the charitable giving of the boy with the five loaves of bread and two fish and the man from Baal-Shalishah.

Why do we have so much poverty in a wealthy world? Notwithstanding the effort to eradicate extreme poverty according to one of the millennium development goals of the United Nations organization, about 800 million people are still living in abject poverty. We need more people with loaves of bread and fish; the world is in dire need of more men from Baal-Shahanshah to share the resources of the world, mainly by feeding the hungry.

Do you prefer to send your leftovers to the bin or to share with those who have nothing to eat? Often what we refer to as waste could be wealth to someone somewhere. After the miracle of feeding the five thousand, there was no waste. The twelve baskets of bread and fish that remained after the meal served the needs of others who were not present on the site of the multiplication.

As we reflect on the message of this Sunday, may we resolve to become givers and sharers as we potentially experience divine multiplication.

Have a great Sunday and a wonderful week ahead.

### PASTOR

Fr. Eric Anokye  
eanokye@richmond-diocese.org  
(276) 385-7312

### OFFICE MANAGER/ BOOKKEEPER

Lydia St. Peter

### OFFICE HOURS

Mon–Fri 9:30AM – 2:30PM

Please call the parish office to make arrangements for the **Sacraments of Baptism, Anointing of the Sick or Holy Matrimony** as well as funerals. **Reconciliation** is available from 30 minutes before a scheduled Mass.

### MASS TIMES

#### SATURDAY

4PM – St. Joseph’s

6PM – St. Mary’s

#### SUNDAY

9AM – St. Elizabeth’s

11:30AM – St. Theresa’s

#### MON | WED | FRI

10AM – St. Theresa’s

Cover image:

Ambrosius Francken,  
*Multiplication of the Loaves and Fishes*, 1598

# Just Do It: Go to Mass on Sundays

by Fr. Connor Danstrom, *Word on Fire*



A friend of mine went to a small Catholic college in New England on a baseball scholarship. His coach was the kind of friendly, no-nonsense journeyman they don't seem to make anymore. At the first practice of the year, he told all the players to take a knee. Then in a thick Massachusetts accent, he said to them, "Now fellas, this is important, so listen up. If you're gonna be on this team, it doesn't matter what you believe. But we go to Mass on Sundays."

This happened almost two decades ago, but even at the time, it would have been considered more than a little politically incorrect. Fortunately, though, the young men understood that there was not an ounce of malice in him. He truly didn't care about the players' personal religious convictions. All were welcome on the team, regardless of creed. But this was a Catholic school, and they represented that school when they wore its jersey, and with that privilege came certain expectations.

And go to Mass they did. Even on road trips, the team would skip batting practice if necessary in order to make it to a Mass in town. Tiny parishes

would see their congregations suddenly swell at early morning Mass as a line of athletic young men would file into a middle pew. And when the collection basket came, they each put something in it, even if it was only a dollar.

By insisting that they go to Mass every Sunday, regardless of how convenient (or inconvenient) it may have been in a given week, my friend's coach was conveying one of life's most valuable lessons. Besides the obvious lesson that one's duty to God comes before everything else, even batting practice, he also taught them that, in life as in sports, consistency might cost you something, but it's worth it.

Immediately after I was ordained a priest, I did a year of graduate studies that culminated in the writing of a seventy-five-page thesis. Intimidated by the sheer size of the project, I felt paralyzed. I did everything I could to avoid sitting down to work on it—other homework, cleaning my room, reading emails, mindlessly staring at my phone—anything to avoid confronting this beast that haunted me at every turn. I knew I had to do something at some point, but as long as I could put it off I would.

Then one day, I decided to get started. The first step was to go to the library. Then it was to check out some books. Then it was to read those books and take copious notes. Then it was to check out some more books. Rinse and repeat.

Before I knew it, I had pages of notes with citations and a pretty substantial bibliography. I started to cut and paste the notes in an order that resembled the structure of an argument. With the help of my thesis director, I outlined three chapters that would each amount to about twenty-five pages. Boom. I had a thesis.

Then I just sat and wrote. Day in and day out, I sat in a quiet corner of the library, or in a loud corner of a coffee shop, and I wrote in my own words the ideas that I had read in those books. I didn't write a seventy-five-page paper. I didn't even write three separate twenty-five-page papers. I wrote 472 paragraphs, made up of 2,066 sentences, containing 22,418 words. And most of them made sense.

It wasn't easy, but it was simple. I just had to do it.

Just like going to Mass.

My catechist in second grade said something to me that I have never forgotten: "Every time you receive Holy Communion, you get more of the life of Jesus in you." I remembered this for years every time I went up to the altar to receive the Body of Christ from the hands of the priest. As I would return to the pew, I would almost feel the power flowing through me. And even if I couldn't feel it, I still trusted in the truth of it. I knew it was doing something, and I knew the effect it was having on me was somehow cumulative. I wasn't becoming a saint overnight, but because my mom was bringing me to Mass every Sunday, Christ was able to move the needle at least a little bit every time.

If you went to Mass every Sunday from the time you were in second grade to the time you were

eighty years old, assuming you were in a state to receive Communion every week, you would receive the Eucharist 3,744 times. Throw in the five regular Holy Days of Obligation every year, and you easily top the four thousand mark. The grace of the Eucharist is infinite because the Eucharist is Christ, and Christ is God. There is enough of God's grace in just one consecrated Host to make any one of us into a saint. But for most sinners like you and me, the building up of that grace into real transformation is gradual, and it takes a long time.

Go to Mass on Sundays: This is the bare minimum the Church has set for the faithful to stay in the state of grace. God gives us 168 hours of life every week, and as long as we are physically able to get to church on Sunday, he asks us for just one of those hours back as a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving. But it's not God who benefits from our attendance at Mass. God empties himself so that we can receive the life-giving grace of the Eucharist. It's not always easy, but it's simple.

We don't always feel up to giving God thanks and praise, and other things will always compete for our time and attention. But if we're consistent in the practice of going to Sunday Mass, the cumulative effect on our lives and relationships will be enormous.

As I initially did with my thesis, we make things more complicated than they need to be. God doesn't play tricks on us. He doesn't give us a lot of riddles to solve to figure out his will for our lives. He reveals himself plainly, and he makes his grace available to everyone who wants and asks for it in faith. When we get to heaven, we don't want to say, "God, where were you when I was struggling? Where were you when I was sad? Where were you when you felt so distant?" He might just say, "I was at Mass on Sunday—where were you?"

It's simple: go to Mass on Sundays.

*mass intentions*

**Date Intention**

**7/24 SATURDAY**

4PM Doug Vance

6PM Hylton family

**7/25 SUNDAY**

9AM Shumate family

11:30AM Gerry Rynne †

*council members*

**PARISH COUNCIL:**

Tonya Hylton, Frannie Minton, Ralph Shawver, Cindy Deskins, Barbara Jones, Donna Lambert

**FINANCE COUNCIL:**

Kathy & Bob Buchanan, Randy Bolling, Doug Vance, Anne Danko, Jim Talbert, Jackie Shawver, Lydia St. Peter

*please pray for*

Louise Serreno\*  
Margie Stutso \*  
Margaret Shawver  
Scotty McBride  
Gerry Hankins  
Clarence Moore  
Lexi Cox  
Sarah Wall  
Paris Whisher  
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Christian Marshall  
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*stewardship of treasure*

**Donations Received as of July 18 (Week 3)**

CHURCH	ATTENDANCE	OFFERINGS
St. Joseph's	7	\$220
St. Elizabeth's	22	\$683
St. Mary's	21	\$60
St. Theresa's	33	\$715
Total	83	\$1,678
Outside Donations		\$621
Year to Date Received		\$7,584
Goal		\$6,923
Ahead/Behind Goal		+\$661

**OUTSIDE DONATIONS—THANK YOU!**

St. Francis, Staunton, VA: \$621

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*parish news & events*

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Fr. Eric's Bible study sessions will resume **July 28** with a study of Revelation. Please join us!

**Spring of 2022—Opportunity of a Lifetime!** An 11-day community pilgrimage to the Holy Land with Fr. Eric and two other local pastors. **There will be an information meeting immediately following the 11:30am Mass at St. Theresa's on Sunday, August 21.** For more info, contact Bond Strong at sarahbondstrong@gmail.com.

**THANK YOU!**

The family of Shirley Hylton wishes to thank everyone for their love and support during this past difficult week. So many of our parish family stepped forward to offer support and help out in so many ways. The family is truly grateful and humbled by your outpouring of love.

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*birthdays & anniversaries:* **JULY**

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**BIRTHDAYS**—25: Grace Barker | 26: Kayla Milhoan | 27: Kathy Buchanan | 29: Steve Ryan

**ANNIVERSARIES**—25: Reece & Bond Strong

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