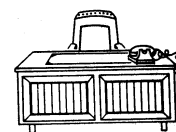


17th Sunday in Ordinary Time

July 29, 2018



From the Desk of
Fr. Romanus

Dear Parishioners,

Sunday Reflection:

The feeding of the five thousand is one of those miracles recorded by all four gospels - Matthew 14:16-21; Mark 6:35-44; Luke 9:12-17; John 6:5-15. Matthew and Mark also record the feeding of the four thousand. Since the Church tries to cover all four Gospels in a three-year liturgical cycle, we end up hearing what appears to be the same Gospel passage about twice a year.

In John's gospel this Sunday, the feeding of the five thousand occurs immediately after a lengthy discourse on the last judgment, the testimonies of John the Baptist and the Father, and lack of faith in the Son of God (Jn 5:19-47). One of the unique things about John's presentation is that he put this miracle in proximity to the Jewish feast of Passover. Of course, the connection between them and the Eucharist is not lost.

In the synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke), the apostles urged Jesus to "dismiss" the crowd as evening drew on, so that they could find some food before it got too late. Jesus threw them a challenge – "You give them some food yourselves" (Mt 17:16; Mk 6:37; Lk 9:13). It was an opportunity for the apostles to put their apostolic skills to good work since they received power and authority as part of their commissioning (Mk. 6:7-13; Mt 10:1-16; Lk 9:1-6). However, in John's gospel there is no mention of the apostles urging Jesus to dismiss the crowd. Instead, Jesus gives the apostles a test when he asked Philip where to buy enough food to feed such a crowd. Philip may have failed the test by stating, perhaps accurately, that two hundred days wages worth of food would not be sufficient to feed the crowd (Jn 6:5-7). It was another way of saying that the situation was beyond their control. The apostles were famous for keeping things real and underscoring the impossibility of the miracle from a human perspective. Rather than dwell on the failed test by Philip in not providing a personal solution, Jesus proceeded to feed the crowd with the miracle of the multiplication of loaves and fish.

It should be noted that the elements (five barley loaves and two fish) used for the miracle were provided by a boy present at the gathering. He is the hero of this story. His generosity made the feeding of such a great crowd possible. In the same way, God is capable of providing for other people's needs through our generosity. The boy's generosity did not deplete his resources. Neither would our generosity deplete our resources. To underscore this, the passage mentions that there were twelve wicker baskets of fragments left over. We recall that when God fed the people of Israel with manna in the desert, Moses told them not to gather more than they needed. This contrasts with Jesus' instruction in this passage to gather up what remains. Those remnants would feed those who were not present for any number of reasons. Likewise, we preserve the leftover communion at Mass for re-use and for communion to the sick who were not present.

In the Eucharist, Jesus continues to perform this miracle of feeding his followers. This is possible through the contributions of those willing to share their resources to keep our parish alive. It would be wonderful if everyone pitched in enough to continue to make the miracle of the sacraments possible in our parish.

One big lesson from this Sunday's gospel is the importance of having greater awareness of the needs around us. Irrespective of what might be going on in our lives, we still have to find time to care for others. Our pains and anxieties may be unwarranted but should not blind us to the sufferings of others. We should not be too quick to dismiss people's needs because they seem overwhelming, for nothing is impossible for God.

Have a great week!

Fr. Romanus