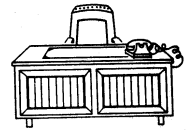


18th Sunday in Ordinary Time

August 2, 2020



From the Desk of
Fr. Romanus

Dear Parishioners,

This Sunday's gospel (different readings for RCIA) from Matthew is about the feeding of the five thousand. The miracle took place in Jewish territory, on the western side of River Jordan flowing into the Sea of Galilee. It was a miracle that underscores our faith in divine providence. As God provides for us in our moments of need, we are obliged to provide for others in need.

One of the fascinating things about this miracle is that it took place when Jesus was most in need. Following the death of his cousin and forerunner, John the Baptist, Jesus was obviously distraught and needed time to grieve. For this reason, he withdrew to a deserted place by himself. However, the crowd would have none of it and followed by foot. By the time he disembarked, they were already waiting. Rather than scold them for bothering him, he felt pity for them. The lesson here is that sometimes we sacrifice our needs for the needs of others.

The disciples wanted Jesus to dismiss the crowd, so they could find food in the surrounding villages. Instead, Jesus instructed his disciples to give them food themselves, but they only had five loaves and two fish. There is a clear contrast between the inability of the disciples to provide a remedy and the ease with which Jesus provided one. They all ate and were satisfied, with twelve baskets full of fragments left.

There is also a big contrast between the preceding banquet presided over by Herod and this banquet presided over by Jesus. The Herod banquet was by special invitation only featured who is who in the kingdom. It was marked by debauchery, rivalry and scheming. The highlight of the banquet was the bloody head of John the Baptist on a platter. Jesus' banquet on the other hand had an open invitation dominated by the poor. We see a remarkable contrast between the values of this world and the values of the kingdom.

Today, God continues to feed his people through the sacrament of the Eucharist. The Eucharistic celebration is reminiscent of the feeding of the Israelites in the desert, the feeding of the crowds in the gospels, and the feeding of the apostles at the last supper. All these accounts reveal God as providential and compassionate. The format for the miracle in the feeding of the five thousand resembles the words of Eucharistic consecration where Jesus also "took the bread, broke it, and gave it to his disciples." The absence of the cup in the miracle of the five thousand could be understood to mean that the blood of Jesus was yet to be shed. The blood of John the Baptist could not be adequate substitute for the blood of Jesus. However, the death of John the Baptist shows how dangerous the mission had become and prefigured what lay ahead for Jesus.

The feeding of the five thousand was a sign to Israel that the Messiah was able to provide for God's people even when there was no food to be had. The fact that there were twelve baskets full of fragments left after the crowd had eaten indicates that he would meet the needs of the world and the twelve tribes of Israel. However, on a basic level, it teaches the importance of avoiding the wasting of food when so many are going hungry. It is hard to imagine how much food our nation wastes every year when many in our poor neighborhoods are starving and millions around the world go hungry. Not only should we avoid wasting food, we ought to share our resources with the less privileged. As Jesus expressed compassion for the hungry and weary crowd, we ought to have compassion for the poor and those on the fringes. God often uses us as the answers to their desperate prayers for help. As we respond to physical hunger, we ought to identify meaningful ways of identifying and responding to the spiritual hunger in us and others.

Have a great week!

Fr. Romanus