

## **FR. JOHN'S HOMILY**

### **Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time, August 2, 2020**

God will provide. We hear these words, but do we believe in them. Do we believe that God will provide? We don't question this when all is well, but have a crisis, lose a job, worry about paying bills, deal with an illness, problems in relationship, face the death of a loved one, and now dealing with a Pandemic and worry about how long it will last. Now ask the question again: Will God provide?

This is what Matthew Gospel's of Jesus feeding the crowd with the five loaves and two fish describes. God provided for the crowd. The apostles were first-hand witnesses to the miracle, each of them holding on to a wicker basket full of bread and fish. Can you imagine what that would have felt like, holding onto all that food when you started out the day with not even enough to share with your friends? As you hold the basket, you look out at the crowd of 5,000 men, add in the women and children and 20-25,000 were eating. Here you are holding onto the leftovers. You have to believe that God does and will provide. Yet with this knowledge, we know the apostles will continue to show the weakness of doubt in their Faith journey.

This event is one of the miracles that is found in all four Gospels. Even though we weren't there 2000 years ago to be fed by God in this miracle, it is very meaningful for us today. It shows us clearly that when men and women give Jesus what they have, he can multiply it to do wonderful and miraculous things.

Jesus had just finished several hours of preaching and healing the sick. Since it was getting late, and the disciples cared about the people in the crowd, they came to Jesus and told him to dismiss them so that they could get something to eat. The disciples likely knew that the people would stay as long as Jesus was preaching and miraculously healing the sick. If Jesus were here, right now, curing people of their cancer, broken legs, diabetes, deafness, blindness and other maladies, we probably would be in no hurry to leave either. So the disciples cared about the crowds, but their care led them to suggest something that actually was not going to happen — leave Jesus, rather than come to him.

Jesus responds immediately to the disciples. "There is no need for them to go: give them something to eat yourselves." Feed them yourselves! By the response of the disciples to this, it appears that they would have if they had the resources. "All we have are five loaves and two

fish,” they replied. Again you can do the math yourself! There was not even enough for them (Jesus and the 12), yet alone the crowd. Yet they were willing to share that food with others.

“Bring them to me!” Jesus said. Jesus took the five loaves and two fish, raised his eyes to heaven, said the blessing, broke the bread, and handed them to his disciples, who then handed them to the crowd. Notice that Jesus handed the bread and fish to his disciples who then passed it among the people in the crowd. Everyone got bread and fish from Jesus through the apostles. Jesus handed Himself, in the form of bread and fish, to His apostles. Again, if you were one of those apostles, left holding onto a basket, surely you would believe that God does provide.

What does this event say to us today? It shows us what Jesus can do when a disciple puts what he or she has at His disposal. The disciples gave Jesus all they had that day — it wasn’t much — but with the five loaves and two fish Jesus was able to feed a crowd. Seven pieces of food fed about 25,000 people until they were satisfied and still there were plenty of leftovers. What Jesus did then, He is doing the same for us at this very moment. When we put what we have at his disposal — our time, our talents, our resources, and even our failings — He can do great things.

So as we look out at our crowd, we too can be overwhelmed with the crowd of problems, violence, unrest, pandemic, and people not believing in God anymore. We know the numbers of Christians have been dropping in recent years, here and around the world. What is going to happen after this pandemic? Will people come back to Church? What can be done to turn things around? We have many crowds.

When we look over our society, we, like the disciples 2000 years ago, see thousands who are hungry — yes some definitely for food, but countless others starving for the Word of God, whether they recognize it or not. Rather than come to the place of true nourishment, Jesus, His Word and His actual flesh and blood, they’re instead resorting to all types of junk food. Tastes great at first, but never really satisfies and makes us feel miserable later. Anything other than God, Jesus, the Bread of life, does not satisfy the true hunger and thirst in our lives. It doesn’t. Isn’t this what we are doing spiritually, starving ourselves to death when we don’t partake of Jesus in Word and Communion?

Most of us feel helpless when we see just how great a need there is, like the apostles must have felt in front of the enormous crowd. And Jesus says in the face of such thousands, to you, to me, to each of us, “Give them something to eat, yourselves!” Give them yourselves, and we say,

all we have are minimal talents, we don't have great influence — how can we possibly give food to such a crowd? Then he adds, “Bring what you have here to me!” He can multiply our little contributions, and he will provide.

Matthew 19: 26: *For human beings this is impossible, but for God all things are possible.* In Christ, all things are possible. If we give him what we have, he can do such wonderful things. Recall the faith of Abraham, Moses, and David. Look at what he did with Mary's yes to the Angel Gabriel! Look at what he did to Peter's profession of faith! Look at what he's about to do to mere bread and wine!

Just as in the Gospel with the loaves, Jesus will look up to heaven, say the blessing, break the bread, give it to his disciples, saying “This is my Body” — and it really is. This is the Mass. This is the one Bread of Life that has been multiplied to feed literally billions throughout the world for all times, and yet every week, there are many who are starving for God, for His word and for His sacrament.

We are the apostles and disciples today, standing before the crowd holding the wicker basket full of loaves and fishes, looking out at the crowd holding Jesus. We have what the crowd needs—Jesus. Jesus told the disciples to distribute Him, fish and bread, to all those who were hungry. So he says to each of us today, to go and distribute Him, His love and His word, to a world that's dying of hunger for Him. Today we each hold onto a wicker basket full of loaves and fish. We have Jesus. And now ask yourself, do I believe that God will provide?