

Homily for the 18th Sunday in Ordinary Time, A, 8/02, 2020

Today we read about one of the most familiar of all the miracles of Jesus namely, the multiplication of the loaves and fish. This miracle can be found in all four Gospels and is actually repeated six times in the New Testament. Because of this fact, it can be so easy for us to drift off and miss its powerful message, namely what are we to do for the poor and needy?

To begin with, Matthew gives us an important piece of information about Jesus. Before this reading begins Jesus and his disciples had slipped away from the crowds to a lonely place in order that Jesus could privately mourn and grieve at the death of John, the Baptist, who was a relative, a friend and a mentor for him. To their surprise the lonely place they had chosen for this private time was filled with people. The crowds had seen Jesus leave the boat he was on and anticipated the place he was going to and arrived there before they did. What was Jesus's reaction? Was he annoyed? Was he upset that he had no private time for himself? No, he had compassion for the crowd and healed their sick and even fed them.

We are also told that the crowd had stayed all day waiting for Jesus. This caused his disciples to be anxious about the people being hungry. They went to Jesus and suggested he dismiss them to their homes so that they could get something to eat. Surprisingly, Jesus suggests that the disciples give them something to eat. The disciples object -- "*saying there is no food here and only a boy with a few loaves and some fish.*" Jesus takes these few loaves and fish, blesses them and gives them to his disciples to feed the crowd of 5,000 men, not counting the women and the children.

What message is there for us as we reflect on this miracle? Is Jesus not saying to us that God's compassion and care for the

needy depends on us today! So often we feel inadequate and shrug our shoulders, thinking what can we do about it. So we do nothing.

There is another message for us today. The words Jesus uses to bless the food are the words we use at mass for the consecration of the Eucharist. Perhaps, when we come to the Eucharist, we should think about how Jesus continues to feed us with his Body and Blood and remind ourselves of our need to be generous with our time and our resources with the needy.

Reflecting on this Gospel passage made me think of the actions and love that Mother Theresa had for the poor and the needy. I think she said it best when she said: *"We can't do great things. We can only do small things, but with great love!"*

Yes, today's Gospel reading is familiar to us, very familiar, yet it never loses its power to touch our hearts and souls, doesn't it!