

August 02, 2020
18th Sunday in Ordinary Time
Isaiah 55:1-3
Psalms 145:8-9, 15-16, 17-18
Romans 8:35, 37-39
Matthew 14:13-21

LIFE GIVING OFFERING!

A nervous young priest, concluding his first homily, told the faithful, **"For my text next Sunday, I will take the words, 'And they fed five men with five thousand loaves of bread and two thousand fishes.'" A member of the flock raised his hand and said, "That's not much of a trick. I could do that."** The young priest didn't respond. However, the next Sunday he decided to repeat the text. This time he did it properly/correctly, **"And they fed five thousand men with five loaves of bread and two fishes."** Smiling, the young priest said to the noisy man, **"Could you do that, Mr. Perkins?" "I sure could."** Mr. Perkins responded. **"How would you do it?"** the young priest asked. Mr. Perkins answered, **"With all the food I had left over from last Sunday!"**

I just want to make it clear that the gospel proclaimed tells us there were five (5) thousand men, not counting women and children, fed with the five loaves and the two fish. It is not the other way around – five (5) men fed with five (5) thousand loaves of bread and two (2) thousand fishes.

The feeding of the multitude that we have heard gives us so many lessons to learn from, to bring home to. It tells us of Jesus' loving care for the physical and spiritual needs of his people. It articulates to us that in Jesus' hands abundance is not an impossibility. It reveals to us that miracle happens to those who are willingly, lovingly and joyfully share their blessings to others. It conveys to us that it is only Jesus who can truly satisfy the deepest hunger and longing of people. It imparts to us the compassion, generosity and mercy of Jesus to the needy. It communicates us that 'sharing is caring.' It tells us that God, in the person of Jesus, provides for his people more than they deserved. It prefigures to us the superabundance of the unique bread of the Eucharist which sustains people on their journey to the kingdom of heaven. These are just some of the lessons we can learn from this gospel episode.

The feeding of the multitude that we proclaimed today came from **Matthew 14:13-21**. Prior to the feeding of the multitude, the previous verses **(3-12)** of **Matthew 14** (which was read in our Saturday Morning Mass today) was the birthday party of Herod that ended in the death/beheading of John the Baptist. Matthew, the evangelist, purposely placed these two stories of meal-gathering next to each other to drive a

point. His point was to contrast/compare the meal-gathering hosted by Herod as oppose to the meal-gathering offered by Jesus. Obviously, Herod's gathering was a picture of death while Jesus' feeding of the multitude depicted compassion, love and life. The former was ushering the 'culture of death' whereas the latter was steering the 'culture of life.'

Prophet Isaiah, in our 1st reading, reiterates/echoes to us the life-giving offering of the Lord to his people. He promised abundant water, grain, milk, wine and bread to those who will return to him with their whole heart. He reassured them of his mercy and love as they renew their covenant with him. He declared to them that he will give them life and not death. He said, **"Come to me heedfully, listen, that you may have life."**

The life-giving offering of the Lord did not only happen in the past. It is still happening today, at this present moment, here in the celebration of the Holy Eucharist. The great 'feeding' of people happens here every day and it is free. He feeds us with his Body and Blood. He offers us life in the liturgy of the Word and in the liturgy of the Eucharist. Here in the celebration, whatever little we have, as long as we humbly and lovingly bring it, he will bless it and make it abundant like what he did with the five (5) loaves and two (2) fish. The only thing our Lord Jesus expects from us is to come to him without ceasing and make ourselves available for him!

Through the grace of God, we have made ourselves available for him in today (*here in Church and via live streaming*). In return, he will feed us physically and spiritually in the celebration. **For what purpose?** Remember, every gift that the Lord gives entails responsibility. Therefore, the purpose of the gift-received here is for us to share it with others. As we are being fed here, we have to feed also those who are physically and spiritually hungry in our society. We have to show that we care by sharing our blessings to those who have none (*and that's one of the concrete action we can do as a community of faith especially when our parish hall is finished – in addition to the feeding we are already doing, we can have the feeding of the homeless here on our sacred grounds*). The care we share will give hope and that hope will add life to our struggling sisters and brothers in the society.

Here at Mass, therefore, let us continue to be grateful to our Lord Jesus for always feeding us – body, mind, and spirit – with the Bread of Life. May the nourishment we freely and lovingly receive from him here be shared generously to others especially during this time of difficulty/trial in our history.

Lord Jesus, fill our hearts with gratitude for your blessings and help us to be generous in sharing it with others. Amen.