

18th Sunday in Ordinary Time, 2 August 2020

Scriptures: Isaiah 55:1-3; Romans 8:35,37-39; Matt. 14:13-21

Homily: Fr. Ken

In the first reading, from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah in the Old Testament, God invites us to come and eat and drink of divine wisdom, food for eternal life.

In the New Testament Letter to the Romans, St. Paul reminds us that nothing can separate us from the love of God made visible in the person of Jesus Christ.

In the story from St. Matthew's Gospel, Jesus feeds thousands of people showing us God's endless generosity in caring for each one of us.

In feeding the thousands of people gathered to listen to Jesus, he is recalling the generosity of God at the time of the Hebrew people's wandering in the desert, when the Lord caused manna, bread from heaven, to fall from the sky each night for the people to eat. It is not an accident that this Gospel miracle of the feeding of thousands takes place, as Matthew tells us, "when evening came". Jesus is taking care of the physical needs of the people who have followed him so faithfully into a "lonely place". That phrase, "lonely place", is the same word as "desert" in the original Greek.

It is also interesting to note that this miracle takes place just after Jesus heard of the death of John the Baptist. It is almost as if Jesus has turned the occasion into a mourning feast for his great herald, cousin, and friend.

What is of particular importance to highlight here is the fact that Jesus first tells his disciples themselves to feed the crowd: he is making them co-workers in his own ministry.

The twelve baskets of leftovers also symbolize the fullness of the new people Jesus is calling together. Jesus is preparing his disciples for the even greater self-giving he himself will carry out on the Cross.

If Jesus, by his divine power, can multiply the loaves and the fishes, how much greater is the generosity where he is present to each of us continually in our daily lives. He feeds us not with earthly food, but with his very self. By sharing in the life of Jesus, we participate not only in Christ's death, but also in Christ's resurrection, and therefore our own as well.

This great generosity of our God not only prepares us for eternal life, but has consequences for us in the here and now. Indeed, if God is so generous with us, ought we not to be generous with others? One of the great challenges always facing us is that the earth's resources should be shared justly among all, especially the poor and all those most in need. This is something we can all work toward, at a personal, collective, and global level. When we contribute to making a more just and equitable world, we ourselves are becoming Christ's co-workers in building up the Kingdom of God.

And we will do this. One of the debilitating impacts of the coronavirus pandemic is an increase in the number of our sisters and brothers in need of food. Therefore, we will again hold another St. Rita "drive-through Food Drive" on the weekend of 29-30 August (*corrected dates*).

Food, death, and religion then are profoundly linked, but utterly transformed in the light of the Gospel and the risen Jesus. Jesus still feeds us in the wilderness which this world can be, but we can always keep in mind that the home of our destiny is the promised land of eternal life with God as Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, and with all the heavenly saints.