

Homily – "You Give Them Something to Eat"

18th Sunday in Ordinary Time

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

Dear brothers and sisters,

Every one of us knows what it is like to feel that we do not have enough. We may feel we do not have enough strength to carry our burdens, enough money to pay our bills, enough patience with our families, enough volunteers in our parish, or enough hope when we look at the future. The disciples felt exactly the same. They looked at a hungry crowd in the middle of nowhere and saw only a problem.

Jesus, however, saw something very different. He did not ask, "How much do you lack?" Instead, He asked, "What do you have?" And then He gave them an unexpected command: **"You give them something to eat."**

That must have sounded impossible. Five loaves and two fish for more than five thousand people! It made no human sense. Yet Jesus was teaching His disciples that God's miracles often begin when we are willing to offer our little.

The first reading from Isaiah echoes the same message. God invites everyone: **"Come to the water... Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price."** God's generosity is never limited by our poverty. While the world measures by scarcity, God measures by abundance. He does not give because we deserve it; He gives because He loves us.

St. Paul, in the second reading, reminds us of another gift that never runs out—the love of Christ. "Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." There will be days when we feel lonely, discouraged, or even forgotten. Some of us may carry grief after losing loved ones. Some struggle with illness or financial worries. Others quietly carry burdens that no one else knows. Yet the Word of God assures us that Christ never abandons us. His love remains constant even when our circumstances change.

My dear parishioners, I often thank God for the generosity I see in both St. Paul's and St. John's communities. We are not the largest parish, and many of our faithful have already given years of dedicated service. Many of you are retired, yet you continue to clean the church, arrange flowers, count collections, welcome people, prepare the liturgy, teach children, visit the sick, support the food bank, and quietly help neighbours who are struggling. Sometimes you may wonder whether your small contribution really matters.

Today's Gospel answers that question. Jesus does not ask for what we do not have. He asks us to place what we do have into His hands. Five loaves in the hands of the disciples remained five loaves. Five loaves in the hands of Jesus became enough for everyone.

The same is true today. A smile offered to someone who is lonely. A phone call to a parishioner who has not been seen for weeks. An hour given to help in the parish. A kind word to someone carrying grief. A prayer for someone in difficulty. These may seem like five loaves and two fish, but in the hands of Christ they become nourishment for many hearts.

This miracle is also a beautiful foreshadowing of the Holy Eucharist. Notice what Jesus does: He takes the bread, blesses it, breaks it, and gives it to the people. Those same actions are repeated at every Mass. Here, Jesus continues to feed us—not simply with bread, but with His own Body and Blood. The miracle of the multiplication of loaves points us to the greater miracle of the Eucharist, where Christ Himself becomes our food for the journey.

Yet there is another challenge hidden in this Gospel. We cannot receive the Bread of Life and remain indifferent to the hunger around us. There are many kinds of hunger today. Some hunger for food. Others hunger for love, forgiveness, friendship, purpose, or hope. There are people living only a few streets away who feel completely forgotten. There are young people searching for meaning, families under pressure, elderly people who long for someone to listen, and neighbours who simply need to know that someone cares.

Jesus still says to His Church, **"You give them something to eat."**

He says it to parents raising children in faith. He says it to grandparents who continue praying for their families. He says it to parish volunteers who faithfully serve week after week. He says it to each one of us.

The good news is that He never sends us alone. The One who asks us to feed others first feeds us Himself. He strengthens us with His Word, nourishes us with His Eucharist, and fills us with a love from which, as St. Paul reminds us, nothing can separate us.

As we come to this altar today, let us place before Jesus our own "five loaves and two fish"—our talents, our time, our weaknesses, our worries, and even our limitations. Let us trust Him to bless them, multiply them, and use them for His Kingdom.

May our parish always be a place where people find not only bread for the body, but also hope for the heart, friendship for the lonely, forgiveness for the sinner, and Christ for everyone who comes through our doors.

Amen.