

18th Sunday in Ordinary Time

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Today's Gospel begins with a very touching scene: Jesus had just received the heartbreaking news that his cousin, John the Baptist, had been beheaded. He withdraws to a deserted place to pray and grieve, yet, the crowds discover where He is and follow Him.

Imagine Jesus stepping out of the boat. He could have said: "Not today, I need to be alone." Instead, the Gospel tells us something beautiful: "He had compassion for them."

Compassion always moves Jesus into action. He heals the sick, spends the whole day teaching them, and when evening comes, He notices another need - they are hungry. This is where the Gospel becomes very personal for each one of us.

The disciples look at the situation and immediately begin calculating: it is late; the place is deserted; the crowd is enormous. Their conclusion is simple and practical: "Send them away." That is the human solution. When the problem seems too large, we often try to move it somewhere else. We avoid it; postpone it; or ask someone else to deal with it.

Jesus has another answer. He says: "They need not go away; you give them something to eat."

The disciples are shocked. They reply: "We have only five loaves and two fish." In other words: "Lord, what we have is not enough." How often have we said the same thing? "I don't have enough money." "I don't have enough strength." "I don't have enough patience." "I don't have enough faith." "I don't have enough time." The disciples are thinking only about their limited resources. Jesus is thinking about the Father's power. Notice that Jesus does not create bread out of nothing immediately. Instead, He asks for the loaves and the fish: "Bring them here to me." Those words are the turning point of the Gospel. The miracle begins not when the bread is multiplied but when the little that the disciples have is placed into the hands of Jesus. Without Jesus, the five loaves remain five



loaves. In the hands of Jesus, five loaves become enough for thousands. This is the difference between human calculation and God's solution.

Human solutions lie within our limitations. God's solution begins with *trust*. That is exactly what Isaiah proclaims in the First Reading: "Come to the waters... Come, buy and eat without money and without price." God does not invite us because we have enough; He invites us because *He* is enough. He is the Shepherd who never abandons His flock. Psalm 23 declares: "The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want."

Today's Gospel shows that Shepherd in action. In a barren place, where no food can be found, the Shepherd Himself prepares a banquet for His sheep. The disciples, themselves, have an important role. Jesus could have fed the crowd by Himself. Instead, He chooses to involve His disciples. Why? Because they are learning to become shepherds, after Him.

A shepherd does not simply identify problems. As shepherds, all disciples are expected to bring people to the eternal Shepherd. While the disciples wanted to send the crowd away, Jesus wanted them to bring their little to Him.

The same lesson is offered to every parent, every priest, every teacher, and every Christian leader: that our first responsibility is not to solve every problem we face ourselves; our first responsibility is to bring every problem we encounter into the hands of Christ. Saint Augustine beautifully expressed this truth when he wrote: "God does not ask what you cannot do. He asks you to do what you can and to ask Him for what you cannot." That is exactly what happens in today's Gospel. The disciples could not feed the five thousand people. All they could offer were five loaves and two fish. God never asks us to do the impossible alone; He asks us to trust Him with what we have.

Saint Teresa of Calcutta lived this every day. When people looked at the thousands of poor she cared for, they asked how such a small woman could accomplish so much. She answered simply: "I am a little pencil in God's hand." She did not trust in her own strength; she trusted God's solution.

In a family, parents sometimes look at their children and wonder: “How can I help them? I have tried everything.” Perhaps today, the Gospel is saying to you: “Bring your family to Jesus.”

For married couples facing difficulties: instead of carrying the burden alone, bring it to Jesus. If you are worried about health, finances, loneliness, or the future, instead of saying: “There is no way!” perhaps today, Jesus is asking you to “Bring it here to Me.”

Many of us pray only after every human solution has failed. Too often, we treat God as our last resort after every human solution has failed. Today, the Gospel invites us to do the very opposite: to make God the *first resort*, not the last.

Jesus invites us to do the same.

Begin with Him. Bring our little five loaves first to Him, then watch what He does with it.

Finally, in the Second Reading today, Saint Paul gives us the greatest reason for hope. He says that nothing - not trouble, distress, persecution, famine, danger, nor death itself - can separate us from the love of Christ. If Christ’s love *never* leaves us, then we are *never* without hope. Every impossible situation is still within God’s reach.

So, today, the Readings tell us that whenever life places us in a deserted place, we have two choices: we can say with the disciples: “Send them away”, or we can hear Jesus saying to us, “Bring them here to Me.” The miracle begins when we stop trusting only on our own perceptions and calculations, and begin trusting in God’s Divine Providence.

May we never be satisfied with mere human solutions. May we always seek God’s solution. For the God who multiplied the loaves is still multiplying hope, peace, strength, and grace in every heart that places the little that they have into His hands.