

## **Homily for the 17th Sunday of Ordinary Time - Year B**

### **St. Peter's Sunday 12:00/5:00 PM Masses - July 25, 2021**

**2 Kings 4:42-44** "They ate and had some left according to the word of the Lord."

**Psalms 145:10-18** "The eyes of all look to you and you give them their food in due season."

**Ephesians 4:1-6** "Make every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

**John 6:1-15** "When Jesus had given thanks, he distributed the loaves, as much as they wanted."

### **In the Spirit, There Is Always Enough**

#### **Introduction**

I have some good news and some bad news. There isn't time to take a vote on which you would like to hear first so I will just decide. The bad news is that this is the beginning of a one hour long homily. The good news is that the one hour long homily will be spread over the next five weeks.

This is one of the most amazing times in the three years of Gospel passages, as we read through the sixth chapter of John's Gospel, which is called "The Bread of Life discourse." John will unfold Jesus' teaching about his unbelievable gift of himself on the cross, that he wants us to receive.

In fact, Jesus' language of eating his flesh is so graphic that almost everyone listening leaves, saying: This teaching is too hard to accept. They want to make him king over them. He wants to become their servant, even to the point of giving his body, blood, soul and divinity for them to eat. John does not include an account of the Last Supper. Instead, he presents Jesus' teaching on the Eucharist. That's the kind of weight it has.

#### **Ephesians**

Yesterday, I was supposed to be working on this homily, but was finding it difficult to hear what God wants to reveal to his people, so I went outside on my front porch. Almost immediately, I noticed two people walking up

the sidewalk from down my street. A young man had a cane like the blind use to feel their way along. That's not so unusual. The man walking with him might have been his father, just by appearances. The older man had his arm out and the blind young man had his hand very lightly on that arm.

There was something very easy and natural about the way they walked together. In fact, their footsteps matched exactly. Right foot for both of them, then left, in perfect harmony. I strained to watch them as they crossed a street and kept on going out of my view. Two things made this a profound moment for me. One was that the blind young man was just holding on to his cane, but not using it. He had perfect trust that he was safe. His father, so I imagined him, was absolutely trustworthy. The second thing I noticed was that their footsteps were not just in harmony, but that they seemed to walk with just one mind, as if they had done this for thousands of miles and many thousands of hours together, of one heart and one mind.

When I went back to my computer, I saw our passage from Paul's letter to the Ephesians in a new light.

*Brothers and sisters, I beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*

What I had witnessed was humble, patient and gentle service, a unity of spirit and a bond of peace, a bearing one with another in love. Paul goes further to say how this is possible:

*There is one body and one Spirit, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.*

When we are in harmony with that one Spirit, we will be ready to experience such harmony in our relationships, the truly perfect harmony

and the oneness of spirit that we would want for all people, to eliminate racism and the other evils.

## **2 Kings**

As Christians, we recognize that this perfect harmonious principle is embodied in Jesus Christ. He is the one that all of history was pointing to before his time. That is why we continue to proclaim the ancient events of the Old Testament. Those events and people give us the taste of the one who would bring to perfection the meaning of those events and people.

Elisha was the prophet who learned from, and took over his ministry from, Elijah, the greatest of the Old Testament prophets. When Elijah died, Elisha asked for and received a double portion of Elijah's authority and miraculous powers. When you look at his resume, it reads a lot like the miracles of Jesus: healings and casting out demons and even raising from the dead.

Elisha had become very confident in the gift he received as a prophet. So, when a man comes to offer Elisha the first fruits of his harvest, he says: "Feed those people over there." The man does not have a donkey loaded with bundles of grain. He has a simple sack on his shoulder. He looks at the few barley loaves in his sack and points out to Elisha that it won't be enough. Perhaps he has some anxiety about this. He just wanted to give his small gift to the man of God but now he has to feed a hundred people.

Have you ever felt that you were willing to offer something of yourself, either your time or your money, but someone may have made you feel like your gift was inadequate. Perhaps you would be frustrated or anxious or even angry, depending on your personality. But, if you turned these thoughts into prayer, you would likely hear what the unnamed man heard: "Just give it to the people and let them eat, for thus says the Lord, they shall eat and have some left. The servant set it before them, they ate, and had some left according to the word of the Lord." Do we hear the point here from the Old Testament? According to the word of the Lord, they ate and had some left.

## John

Remember that St. John, at the beginning of his Gospel, identifies the Word of the Lord as Jesus himself. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things came into being through him."

Feeding of the 5000 is one of only two stories that is in all four gospels. The other is the resurrection. Elisha fed 100 people with 20 barley loaves. Jesus fed 50 times that many with a boy's lunch, five small loaves and two fish. Philip figured six month's wage to provide just a little for that many. Andrew could only see the uselessness of one boy's lunch. But they miss the point. We always miss the point. When we give the first fruits of our produce, when we give up the lunch we made for ourselves, God makes it enough, no matter how many people.

You give what you have and God will make it enough. In the world, as things become scarce, anxiety goes up. We saw it first hand, not just with toilet paper but with everything. Will there be enough of the things we need to go around. Will there be enough for me. This is a reflection of our deepest longings. If I give of myself, will I get enough love in return?

Fr. Maximillian Kolbe, in the death camp at Auschwitz, chose a moment to make his life a gift to save one man who had a family he hoped to return to. And now, we look to Fr. Kolbe as one of the most Christ like saints of the entire Christian era, one who gave his life as a ransom for another. God made an abundance out of one act of self giving.

Because Jesus satisfied their human cravings with a miracle, they wanted to make him king over them. But Jesus wants everyone to see his desire to feed us, not to rule over us. He wants us to give him the little we have so he can give us what he has to give, which will be more than enough. We can't do that with our fist clenched tightly around what we think is valuable. Trust in me, Jesus says, not because I perform signs, but because I want to give you everything, not just earthly bread.

The Church gives more to society than any other organization in the world. And 80% of that giving is done by less than 10% of Catholics. Imagine what could be accomplished if even one percent more said, I will give what I have for today. I will give what I can. Or perhaps, I will walk with even one person so they don't stumble.

I remember a story I heard as a teenager. I later realized it might be one of those urban legends but that didn't change its effect on me. It was about a war torn village where an errant shell had exploded near some children. One was bleeding and seriously injured. There was an English speaking doctor at a mission hospital who knew the boy could only be saved with a blood transfusion. Through an interpreter, he tried hard to ask if anyone would be willing to give some blood to save the boy. Another boy tentatively stepped forward. They hooked him up to the IV and started the process. At one point, he began to cry. The doctor tried to find out what was wrong. Did the IV tube hurt? Again, through one of the children who could speak English came the answer. The boy wondered when he was going to die. He had understood the request that all of his blood would be required to save his friend, yet he had offered anyway.

That story may be an urban legend but every day there are real stories of self giving love, like Fr. Kolbe, like a man walking in the bond of love with his blind son. But the greatest of these is that Jesus took the cup and said: This is the chalice of my blood which will be poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins, which is the greatest gift of all.

### **Call To Action**

What stops us from giving our lunch? Is it a feeling of scarcity of what we have or what we won't have if we give it away. Am I a giver or a taker? How to become a giver? Just start. The first step is the first fruits. The first 10% of the crop goes to the Lord.

Nothing we can enjoy today will satisfy us for tomorrow except for God alone. Nothing on this earth will be enough. Ultimately we hunger for God.

Only God can satisfy our hearts. Again today, God will take our little gifts of bread and wine, transform them by the power and unity of the Holy Spirit, and give it back to us as the gift of himself, poured into our lives. There will be leftovers. It will be up to us whether those go to waste or whether they will further the giving that is without limit to those with faith.

## Key Passages

**Entrance Antiphon:** *God is in his holy place, God who unites those who dwell in his house.*

**Collect:** *O God, without whom nothing is holy, grant that we may use the good things that pass in such a ways as to hold fast to those that ever endure.*

**2 Kings:** *A man came bringing food from the first fruits to Elisha. The man of God said: "Give it to the people and let them eat." But his servant said: "How can I set this before a hundred people?" So Elisha repeated: "Give it to the people and let them eat, for thus says the Lord, They shall eat and have some left." The servant set it before them, they ate, and had some left according to the word of the Lord.*

**Psalms:** *You open your hand to feed us, Lord. You satisfy all our needs. They eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food in due season. The Lord is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth.*

**Ephesians:** *Brothers and sisters, I beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.*

**John:** *A large crowd kept following him, because they saw the signs that he was doing. Jesus went up the mountain with his disciples. Now the Passover was near. When he looked up and saw a large crowd coming, Jesus said to Philip: "Where are we to buy bread for these people to eat?" Philip answered: "Six months wages would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little." Andrew said: "There is a boy here who has five barely loaves and two fish. But what are they among so many people?" Jesus took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated; so also the fish, as much as they wanted. He told his disciples: "Gather up the fragments left over, so that nothing may be lost. The fragments filled twelve baskets. When Jesus realized that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, he withdrew again to the mountain by himself.*