

17<sup>th</sup> Sunday per Annum - B  
2 Kings 4:42-44;  
Ephesians 4:1-6;  
John 6:1-15  
Little Flower - 7/25/21

My Brothers and Sisters,

As you probably know, the Church's Sunday Lectionary has three cycles corresponding to the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Our Sunday Gospels this year primarily come from Mark's Gospel. However, because Mark's Gospel is the shortest Gospel, the Lectionary inserts John 6, the multiplication of the loaves and fish and Jesus' Eucharistic Discourse, into Ordinary Time beginning today with the story of the multiplication of the loaves and fish.

The first part of John's Gospel is often titled "The Book of Signs." For John, miracles are never simply facts or events but signs. Jesus uses this miracle as a starting point for his Eucharistic Discourse.

Scripture scholars offer two interpretations of this miracle. The traditional interpretation takes the text at face value. There were only five loaves and two fish, and Jesus multiplied them feeding five thousand men, not including women children, with twelve baskets of fragments left over. In other words, Jesus worked a physical miracle.

The other interpretation is that Jesus worked a moral miracle, causing all to share what they had with others. Many people argue against this interpretation because it seems to take away from Jesus' divine power to work miracles. However, although I have always believed the first interpretation, I have found the second interpretation intriguing. First, Scripture scholars who support this interpretation argue that it is inconceivable that all those people would have followed Jesus without bringing any provisions. However, the more intriguing question is whether physically multiplying loaves and fish or changing more than 5000 human hearts is the greater miracle.

Today, however, I would like to focus on the twelve baskets of fragments left over "*that had been more than they could eat.*" God gave them more food than they could eat. This story then proclaims the superabundance of God's love for us and God's gifts to us. This suggests that when we reflect on God's gifts to us, which should be every time we reflect upon what is good in our lives, we should look for **all** the ways God blesses us.

Second, I wonder what happened to the twelve baskets of fragments. Were they simply left there? Probably not since they were gathered into twelve wicker baskets. Were they divided among the people? Were they taken home and shared with other family members or neighbors or with people in need? We have no idea! However, the twelve baskets of fragments challenge us to realize how blessed we are and to share our blessings with others. No matter how little we think we have, we are so blessed compared to so many people throughout the world.

Third, the twelve wicker baskets reminded me of how much food we waste as individuals, families, and as a nation. Perhaps if we wasted less, we might have more to contribute to feed those who are hungry at home and elsewhere. Also, I could not help but think about all the trash that goes into landfills.

My brothers and sisters, today's reading from Paul's Letter to the Ephesians challenges us to live in a manner worthy of the call we have received. If we have become sons and daughters of God and, therefore, brothers and sisters of one another, we are called to live as sons and daughters of God and brothers and sisters of one another. To do so, we first have to really see others as true brothers and sisters and then live the qualities of healthy families Paul listed: humility, gentleness, patience, and bearing with one another in love.

Second, calling us "*preserve the unity of the spirit through the bond of peace,*" Paul challenges us to remember that we are not the source of unity in the Christian community. God is. The Church has both divine and human elements. The unity of the Church originates in the divine elements: "*one body and one Spirit....one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all....*" Our challenge is not only to preserve unity but to deepen that unity.