

17th Sunday in Ordinary Time, July 28, 2024

Today's readings invite us to become humble instruments in God's hands by sharing our blessings with our needy brothers and sisters. They focus on hunger and food and how we can satisfy the deeper hunger of our life. They remind us that if we and our country are blessed with an abundant food supply, we need to share it with the hungry people and poor countries.

The first reading tells us how the prophet Elisha, by invoking the power of God, fed one hundred men with twenty barley loaves. Elisha relied not on what he had, but on what God would do with what the Prophet had received as a gift. This miracle foreshadows the Gospel account of Jesus' miraculous feeding of the pursuing crowd seeking the Master.

In the second reading, St. Paul gives us the theology behind sharing. Jesus united the Jews and the Gentiles by bringing them together as Christians in one Faith by means of one Baptism, enabling them to become communities of sharing Christians living together and helping each other by sharing their blessings.

In today's Gospel, the miracle of Jesus feeding the five thousand people, using five barley loaves and two fish offered by a boy in the crowd through the apostles, is associated with the Holy Eucharist early in the Church's tradition. That is why it is described in all four Gospels. The people who had been fed immediately gave Jesus two Messianic titles: "The prophet" and "the one who is to come."

This miracle teaches us that God works marvels through ordinary and simple people. Elisha's servant and Jesus' disciples distributed the bread provided by God through generous people who were willing to share their food with the hungry. Thus, God meets the needs of people through the good will and services provided by members of His community.

The Gospel story also teaches that Jesus meets the most basic human need, namely hunger, with generosity and compassion, tells us that God really cares about His people, and shows us that He provides more than enough for everybody.

A challenge to generous sharing:

As Christians, we need to commit ourselves to share and to work with God in communicating His compassion to all, as the early Christians did (Acts 4:32). God always blesses those who share their blessings, time, and talents with loving commitment. We can begin our own humble efforts at "sharing" right in our parish by participating in the works of charity done by organizations like the Knights of Columbus etc. Once physical hungers are satisfied, then we are challenged to satisfy the deeper hungers, for love, mercy, forgiveness, companionship, peace, and fulfillment.