

Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ

Genesis 14: 18-20 + Psalm 110: 1-4 + 1 Corinthians 11: 23-26 + Luke 9: 11b-17

Holy Spirit Catholic Church: May 29, 2016

All four Gospels relate this account of the feeding of the 5000.

It is the only miracle story that Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John share in common. But because they are evangelists, communicating the Good News of Jesus Christ in a specific way to their communities, each Gospel writer presents this account in a different context.

Luke connects this miracle of the abundance of God's providential love with the saving sacrifice of Christ Jesus

and the invitation to share in this saving mission of Christ.

Immediately following the account of the feeding of the 5000, the Lucan Jesus shocks Peter and the rest by teaching them his mission as the Messiah involves suffering and dying and rising, and that they are to follow his example.

"If anyone wants to come after me, he must deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow me."

Because the feeding of the 5000 contains so many Eucharistic overtones, the Church's lectionary pairs Paul's teaching on the Eucharist with Luke's account to shed light on its sacrificial element.

"For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord until he comes." (1 Cor. 11: 26)

It seems that the Church in Cycle C's celebration of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ wants us to ponder more deeply the theme of "sacrifice"

in connection to the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist, and the real presence of Christ in us.

Our mission, as it was for the Twelve, is to feed others hunger for God by our lives of sacrificial love.

Fed by the saving love of Jesus at the Eucharist, we are called to feed others.

This is the command of Jesus at the heart of the account of the feeding of the 5000.

As the Twelve try to convince Jesus to send away the large crowd

to fend for themselves, he commands them, ***"Give them something to eat yourselves."***

Jesus has been teaching the crowd about the kingdom of God.
The apostles have recently returned from being sent on a mission to do just this—to teach others about the Kingdom of God.
Now Jesus will teach them, and us, in a more profound way,
what “*Kingdom-thinking and Kingdom-acting*” look like.
Because the values of the Kingdom of God stand in stark contrast
to the values of the kingdoms of this world.

Where our culture constantly bombards us with messages to push away
those who come to us in need, we who advance the Kingdom of God reach out
to welcome and feed with love those who are in need.
Where politicians call for the building of walls, the values of the Kingdom of God propel
us to build bridges of compassion and understanding.
Where those who give service to the kingdoms of this world would “send home”
those fleeing violence, we welcome them as the suffering Christ in our midst.

In the Kingdom of God, people look after one another,
they do not push each other away the moment needs appear.
They meet needs rather than dismiss them or demonize those who are in need.

This kind of self-giving sacrificial love is a defining mark of followers
of the Crucified and Risen One, flowing from a way of thinking which is different
than the standard way of thinking.
The Twelve are part of a standard way of thinking.
They match resources to needs to gauge if needs are able to be met.
5 loaves and 2 fish to feed 5000---- the practical answer, is no way! Impossible!
Sending the large crowd away is good practical advice, but it does not reflect
the values of the kingdom which Jesus wants to teach.

Jesus take a different approach.
He does not diminish the bread nor the fish by playing the numbers game—
how many times do five and two go into 5000?
Instead, Jesus does what he does with everything.
He looks to heaven, referring the five loaves and the two fish to their Source, the One
from whom all food comes, and, the One who ultimately provides for His people.
Jesus blesses the food, which means he gives thanks for it.
He sees the food as a gift from God.

It is not an insufficient resource for an immense need.
It is what God has given and what they have.

Then he breaks the food.

The breaking begins the sharing, the moving of the five loaves and the two fish toward the 5000.

Since this is a teaching for the Twelve, they must set the food before the crowds.

The people eat and are filled.

Twelve baskets of broken pieces are left over.

It seems the Twelve had enough food all the time, but they did not know it.

The default mode of human consciousness is to notice what we do not have and pull back into ourselves.

This is especially true in situations of darkness and desert.

This cultivates an attitude—“let others take care of themselves” contrary to the sacrificial love of Christ, which we are called to imitate.

A Christian attitude is to gather and give thanks for whatever we have, appreciating resources as a gift and not as an inadequacy, gifts meant to be shared.

As gifts, they fall under the spiritual law of “*freely receiving, freely giving.*”

And when they are given away, they fall under a 2nd spiritual law: if you hold onto life, you will lose it, but if you lose life for the sake of the kingdom, you will find it.

The people who receive the life that is given will be filled; and the people who give will have life given back---like the twelve baskets full, one for each of the givers.

Fr. Joseph A. Jacobi