

18th Sunday in Ordinary Time- A: "The Compassion of Christ Satisfies Every Hunger and Calls Us to Share His Love.": Is 55:1-3; Rom 8:35, 37-39; Mt 14:13-21

A teacher once asked her students, "What is the greatest miracle Jesus performed?" One child answered, "Feeding the five thousand." The teacher smiled and asked, "Why do you think it is the greatest?" The little boy replied, "Because Jesus didn't just fill their stomachs; but He showed them that no one is forgotten by God." This simple answer captures the heart of today's Gospel.

Jesus had just received the heartbreaking news of the death of His cousin, John the Baptist. He withdrew to a lonely place to grieve and pray. But the crowds followed Him. Instead of turning them away, **"He had compassion on them."** Compassion is more than feeling sorry for someone. The word literally means "to suffer with." Jesus entered into their hunger, their pain, their loneliness, and their needs.

The disciples looked at the crowd and saw a problem. Jesus looked at the crowd and saw people loved by His Father. They wanted to send them away; Jesus wanted to draw them close. That is always the difference between human calculation and divine compassion.

The five loaves and two fish seemed insignificant. Yet once they were placed into the hands of Jesus, they became more than enough. God often works in the same way in our lives. We sometimes think our faith is too weak, our talents too small, or our resources too limited. But Christ does not ask us to perform miracles; He asks us to place what we have into His hands. When we do that, He multiplies our generosity beyond anything we can imagine.

Isaiah echoes the same invitation in the first reading: **"Come to the water... Come without money and without price."** God's grace cannot be bought. His love is freely given. He alone can satisfy the deepest hunger of the human heart—the hunger for forgiveness, peace, hope, and eternal life.

Then St. Paul gives us one of the most comforting promises in all of Scripture: **"Nothing can separate us from the love of Christ."** Not suffering, not failure, not sickness, not disappointment, not even death. We may sometimes walk away from God, but God never walks away from us. His covenant of love remains faithful because it is rooted in His mercy, not in our perfection.

Every celebration of the Holy Eucharist makes today's Gospel present again. Jesus still takes bread, blesses it, breaks it, and gives it to His people. The miracle of the multiplication of the loaves points to the greater miracle of the Eucharist, **where Christ feeds not only our bodies but our souls with His very life.**

Today, I would also like to thank all of you for your prayers and your participation in our **Called by Name** vocation initiative. Because of your prayers and

encouragement, the Holy Spirit is bringing new life to our Diocese. We rejoice that **two priests have been ordained in the past two years, five new seminarians** will begin formation this fall, a **Vocation Team of six priests** is serving throughout the Diocese, more than **200 young men** have been identified through *Called by Name*, and discernment groups are now beginning in many places. These are signs that Christ continues to call labourers into His harvest.

But these young men need our continued prayers and support. Bishop Gruss invites each of us to prayerfully consider making a generous gift to help educate our seminarians and strengthen vocation ministry throughout our Diocese. Just as the boy in today's Gospel offered his five loaves and two fish, each gift we offer—whether large or small—can be multiplied by God to bless His Church. Your generosity will help ensure that future generations continue to receive the Bread of Life through faithful priests. If you are able, please use the special envelopes available in the pews or make your gift online.

My brothers and sisters, every one of us comes to Mass carrying some kind of hunger—a hunger for peace, healing, forgiveness, purpose, or hope. Today Jesus says to each of us, "**Come to Me.**" His compassion is greater than our weakness. His generosity is greater than our need. And His love is so powerful that **nothing—absolutely nothing—can separate us from the love of Christ.** May we leave this Eucharist nourished by His love and ready to become bread broken and shared for others. Amen