

## 18<sup>th</sup> Sunday (A) '26

- At every Mass, during the preparation of the gifts, we pray: *"Blessed are you, Lord, God of all creation, for through your goodness we have received the bread & wine we offer you - they will become for us the bread of life & our spiritual drink."*
- It is a beautiful prayer, but it is also challenging & even dangerous - because if we understand "bread of life & spiritual drink" as something only for our own private relationship with God, something that satisfies our inner needs but has no connection with the physical hunger & suffering of people in our world, then we have misunderstood the Eucharist.
- The Eucharist is never an escape from the world; it is God's way of transforming us so that we can enter more deeply into the world with compassion, justice & love.
- The bread we receive at this altar can only truly become spiritual food for us if it leads us to share earthly bread with those who hunger, to care for those who are forgotten, & to work for a world where all people have what they need to live with dignity; this is the deeper meaning of today's Gospel - the feeding of the five thousand.
- Too often we focus only on the miracle itself, yet Matthew's account is remarkably simple.
- He does not describe how the multiplication happened; he tells us only that Jesus *"took the five loaves & the two fish, looked up to heaven, blessed & broke the loaves, & gave them to the disciples."*
- Matthew is less interested in explaining the miracle than in showing us what it means.
- The disciples see the crowd's hunger; they are compassionate enough to recognise the problem, but their solution is to send the people away: *"Let them go to the villages & buy food for themselves."*
- But Jesus responds with a challenge that still confronts us today: *"There is no need for them to go away; you give them something to eat yourselves."*
- Those words are directed at the Church in every age: *You give them something to eat.*
- Jesus asks the disciples to bring what they have - five loaves & two fish seem hopelessly inadequate for such a great need & yet when those small resources are placed in Jesus' hands, they become abundant.
- This is the pattern of God's kingdom - God does not ask us to provide what we do not have; God asks us to offer what we do have, & then God transforms it.
- Even the twelve baskets of leftovers are significant.
- Matthew is reminding us of the twelve tribes of Israel & the abundance of God's covenant love. God's generosity is not limited or rationed.
- There is enough for everyone & so the problem is not God's abundance; the problem is often our unwillingness to share it.

- The Eucharist we celebrate each week is the ultimate sign of this abundance; Christ gives himself completely so that we might become a people who give ourselves completely; we receive Christ's body so that we may become Christ's body in the world.
- This is why the Eucharist must always lead us outward.
- As a parish community, we know this: through our support of those in need, our collections throughout the year, our donations of food for asylum seekers & for the Poor Man's Mass, we seek to respond to Christ's command: *"Give them something to eat."*
- But the Gospel asks even more of us.
- Christian compassion is not only about responding to immediate needs; it is also about addressing the structures & causes that create poverty & hunger.
- We are called not only to feed the hungry but to ask why so many people remain hungry in a world with more than enough resources.
- As the Letter of James reminds us: *"If a brother or sister has nothing to wear & no food for the day, & one of you says to them, 'Go in peace; keep warm & eat well,' but does nothing to meet their needs, what good is that?"* Faith that does not become action is lifeless.
- Yet hunger takes many forms; there are people who hunger not only for food but for belonging, acceptance, friendship & hope; there are people on the margins of society who long to be seen & valued.
- This is where our journey of synodality as a Church becomes so important.
- The universal Synod on Synodality has reminded us that the Church is called to walk together; to listen deeply, to hear the voices of all people, especially those who feel excluded, & to discern together how God is calling us to respond.
- Synodality is not simply a Church program; it is the Eucharistic way of being Church.
- Just as Jesus gathered the disciples around the one table, blessed the gifts they brought, & sent them out to feed the crowd, so today Christ gathers us, listens to us, transforms what we offer, & sends us out together & so the question is not: "Do we have enough?"
- The disciples asked that question & saw only scarcity.
- The question is: "Are we willing to place what we have in Christ's hands?"
- Our time, our talents, our compassion, our resources, our willingness to listen & walk with others - these are the loaves & fish that Christ can multiply.
- The measure of our capacity to transform the world is not determined by what we possess; it is measured by our willingness to come to Christ, to trust his abundance, & to allow his love to work through us.
- As our gifts of bread & wine are transformed into Christ, may we also be transformed into Christ's presence for a hungry & searching world.
- May we become, together, the Eucharistic people Jesus calls us to be.