

17<sup>th</sup> Sunday OT Year B

*Live in the manner worthy of your call.*

July 29, 2018

Readings: 2 Kings 4:42-44; Ephesians 4:1-6; John 6: 1-15

I was at the University of St. Thomas Chapel for a wedding yesterday afternoon. Arriving early to secure parking, I checked out the fieldhouse, the site of a large youth Catholic conference. We welcome buses Sunday afternoon as they return to their home dioceses in WI, ND, MI, etc.

The large space was masterfully set up, not only for 2100 youth, but for break-out sessions, an area both for concessions and confessions! Most importantly, there was a carefully thought out space for receiving their box lunches; very efficient, very smooth. They were prepared. But the crowd in today's Gospel was not. Why not? The people were willing to suffer this inconvenience in order to hear Jesus.

My first visit to Israel took place during the hot summer of 1988 here in Minnesota. Equally warm in Israel and then some, we visited the very places mentioned in this morning's Gospel, making it easier for me to picture a large crowd— hungry, tired and hot— listening to the words of Jesus, but equally ill-prepared to deal with practical necessities of feeding the crowds after the discourse.

Jesus' miracle had as its principal motive that of pity and compassion, for some of the people had traveled all day and some had been away for days. Though he had as his intention to prepare their minds for his Eucharistic discourse that would follow the next day, he first took pity on their physical needs.

This miracle should convince us that Christ is interested in our daily needs as well, just as he was in those of his contemporaries in Palestine. Today's passage prepares us for the longer Bread of Life discourse that is to follow in the coming Sundays at Mass. The sixth chapter of St. John's Gospel is foundational for our Eucharistic theology in the Church; today's account is the preamble.

Jesus knew that their physical hunger was in large part due to their desire to listen to him and to be in his presence—so he gave them what they needed in the moment. We can trust that his mercy and power will give to us, even that for which we may be afraid to ask.

The boy in the Gospel was without guile. He did his part to help, and though on the face of it, it would be minimal, it became the impetus for the most amazing miracle of all. He was not afraid to step forward. It might seem like an insignificant gesture, but the young man put all that he had at the disposition of others.

Do not be afraid to ask from God what you need, for he desires to give us all that is in accordance with His will for our lives. He will not remove all the shadows from the paths we forge, for this would not be for our eternal good, which is after all, Christ's first interest in us.

Live in the manner worthy of your call, humbly accepting the trials that come your way, knowing that God desires to care for our needs, just as he desires that we assist others with their needs as a response to God's love for us.

He is able to fill us with abundance from our own meager resources, giving us all that we need and more. Let us never forget that our calling from God is at its heart an invitation to the fullness of the heavenly banquet, prefigured in the Holy Eucharist given to us as pure gift.