

Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Year B

II Kgs 4:42-44

Ps 145:10-11, 15-16, 17-18

Eph 4:1-6

Jn 6:1-15

Christopher J. Drennen, O.S.A.

This morning, there were parents who did not know if they would get to church today because of all they had to do to prepare the family to just get out the door. This summer there are students looking at their academic schedule for the fall and do not know how they will get all the required work done in order to pass their classes. Every day there are people in this congregation who do not know how they will pay their bills on time or even pay them at all. There are relationships that do not know if they will make it through the day, if they can deal with the pain, if they are good enough for their loved ones. There are people with illnesses that do not know when or if they will find physical healing. Others are feeling guilty and wonder if there is enough forgiveness in the universe to set them free.

But, somehow, most of the time, we do get through our trials, and usually, we find we are able to do more than we ever imagined we could do. Somehow, there is a power in our lives that gives us energy and strength that we did not know we had. We find that we usually have more resources than we ever could have imagined.

If we get the chance to look back at how far we have come, we cannot know how we did it. That is unless we are Christians who know the power of our mighty God. Elisha the prophet empowers his servant to feed the hundred people with just twenty barely loaves. In the Gospel today, Jesus empowers the disciples to feed thousands with even less. How does this happen?

This is the power of faith in God. Faith is the power to do more than we can ever do on our own. Faith is the ability to trust when we have no answer to how we will accomplish our many tasks. Faith in the power of Jesus transformed the disciples into doubters who could not feed the crowd, into instruments of the Lord who could and did feed the crowds. With faith, we not only succeed, we also have more left over than we ever knew we had to begin with!

Rarely are we confronted with the monumental tasks of the disciples in the Gospel. Rarely will we be asked to feed thousands of people with only five barley loaves and two fish. But, every day God does want us to reach out beyond our perceived human ability and build up his kingdom here in our midst. How can we do this? How can we find the strength to trust and act on faith? We are doing it right now. We are doing it by being part of this community gathered for the Eucharist. We are part of a powerful transformation happening in our midst as we are being transformed into the Body of Christ that is this Eucharistic moment.

Each week, we break open the word of God and communally hear the Word and let it transform and inspire us. Each week, we offer up our little lives, our hopes and fears

and worries and joys and dreams. We do that in the form of the bread and wine, and that is all we have to do. Give it to God. Place it all on the altar. Trust that the little we share will become the most we can have: the very presence of Jesus in the Body and Blood of Christ that we receive.

The Eucharist is our feeding of the multitudes. The Mass is our way of both being fed and feeding others. The strength we find in the celebration both fills us up and enables us to have more to share with the world who can not be with us. We are both fed to “have out fill” and have more left over than we could possibly consume ourselves. This abundance is what we gather in the twelve whicker baskets to bring out to the world so that nothing goes to waste.

Ephesians reminds us that we are all in this together. We are called to a unity that is impossible without the power of our one God, our one Lord, one faith and baptism. We are all children of one God and Father. This unity can only happen through faith and the transformation that happens in the Eucharist. The Eucharist is the central act of our worship. We all participate together, and are together made into the one Body of Christ. That unity does not dissolve as we disperse out of these doors today. That unity binds us to our God and bonds us to one another. We all receive the One Bread, the One Cup; the one real presence of Jesus. Let us take that awesome presence and go out to do more than we can ever imagine on our own. The blessings we receive are more than we can consume for ourselves alone. Let’s gather them up and take them to all in need. That is the miracle of faith, the miracle of the Eucharist, the real feeding of the multitudes that continues today.