

Homily for 18th Sunday in Ordinary Time

How often have we heard this Gospel? We get the message...Jesus feeds many from the little that is put into His hands. But that isn't the end of the story.

This is an important Gospel story...it is the only Gospel miracle that appears in all four Gospels. I fear that we have missed the real import of this all too familiar story.

To discover what this lesson is, we have to focus on something that Christ says in the middle of the passage. Let's look at the whole story.

The people of Israel simply can't get enough of Christ. They never stop entreating Christ and His disciples to take care of their needs. They are relentless.

That relentlessness is more than evident in this passage. Jesus has just heard of the death of John the Baptist. It is a moment of grief. Remember, they were related to each other. It is a real human loss for Christ.

It is also a moment of fear. For the death of John the Baptist would herald Christ's own approaching passion. Christ simply wants to

get away...to go into the desert, to think and reflect upon what has happened as He mourns the death of John.

But the crowds aren't thinking of Christ's grief. They are thinking of themselves. And nothing is going to stop them from following him. Into the desert they go....over 5000 people.

Once in the desert the disciples panic. So they implore Christ to "dismiss the crowd"...send them away...let them go and find food. And here it comes...the quote that is the heart of this passage. Jesus turns quickly to His disciples and says to them: "give them some food yourselves." They look at each other. What is He saying? What does he mean? We don't have any food.

And then it happens... they bring Christ the little food they have. Christ blesses it and then gives it only to the disciples. It is the disciples, in turn, who feed the 5000...not Christ. He only feeds his intimate friends. It is the task of the twelve, the disciples, to feed everyone else.

Here is our lesson on this Sunday at the end of July. God blesses each one of us. God feeds us. God graces us with abundant gifts... which we often take for granted. God feeds us in the Eucharist with the Bread of Life and the Cup of Salvation. Christ wants us to take those blessings, those talents, those gifts which God has given us and in

turn “feed” those who come into our lives looking for a listening ear, a compassionate heart and a helping hand. Enriched by the gift of the Eucharist we are the disciples that Christ looks to take what He has given to us and, in turn, give it to others. Here is the most profound lesson of faith: it is not about us but about what we bring to others.