

## What Do We Do With What We Have Been Given

18<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Ordinary Time - August 02, 2020

I never stop marveling at the power of God.

He created the universe out of nothing.

Needless to say, if he can do that, he can do anything.

The readings are all about the abundance of God.

The first reading, "Everyone who thirsts come to the waters—there is enough for everyone.

If you have no money—come eat and drink—it will not cost you anything."

In the gospel,

Sometimes we can get so caught up in the story of the multiplication of the loaves that we miss a few important details.

Numbers played a huge role in ancient Middle Eastern culture.

It is no coincidence that there are 5 loaves and 2 fish.

5 and 2 are 7, and 7 is the sign of completion.

Think of the seven days of creation.

So the story is all about Jesus taking the fruits of creation and offering them up to his Father.

And even after everyone ate their fill there were 12 baskets full.

Now when any good Jew, of the time, heard 12,

they would immediately think of the 12 tribes of Israel.

The twelve full baskets, the remnants of the meal...

a meal in which they are all filled and satisfied, echo God's covenant, that he would always fill and satisfy the twelve tribes of Israel.

So often we focus on the needs around us, which is often a reflection of what we do not have.

More often than not, nothing gets done,

because we do not have the resources to do what is necessary.

Perhaps we need to focus on what we do have, and see how that can be used.

There is a story of someone who focused on what he did have. It is the story of stone soup.

I would like to share it with you

Once upon a time there was a great famine,

in which people jealously hoarded whatever food they could find,

hiding it even from their friends and neighbors.

One day a wandering soldier came into a village

and began asking questions about where he could stay the night the night.

"There's not a bite to eat in this village," he was told. "You better keep moving on."

"Oh, I have everything I need," he said.

"In fact, I was thinking of making some stone soup to share with all of you."

At that he pulled a large iron cauldron from his wagon, filled it with water, and built a fire under it.

Then, with great ceremony,

he drew an ordinary-looking stone from a velvet bag and dropped it into the water.

By now, hearing the rumor of food, most of the villagers had come to the square  
or watched from their windows.

As the soldier sniffed the "broth" and licked his lips in anticipation,  
hunger began to overcome their skepticism.

"Ahh," the soldier said to himself rather loudly, "I do like a tasty stone soup.  
Of course, stone soup with *cabbage* -- that's hard to beat."

Soon a villager approached hesitantly, holding a cabbage he'd retrieved from its hiding place,  
and added it to the pot. "Capital!" cried the soldier.

"You know, I once had stone soup with cabbage and a bit of salt beef as well, and it was fit for a king."

The village butcher managed to find some salt beef . . .  
and so it went, through potatoes, onions, carrots, mushrooms, and so on,  
until there was indeed a delicious meal for all.

The soldier was inspired, he did not look at what he did not have, he looked at what he did have.

Another detail that often gets overlooked is that they were in a deserted place.  
This place would have reminded the people of their ancestor's journey  
in another deserted place...the desert.

A place where God fed the people with manna.

It is no surprise that in this "deserted place" God...Jesus...feeds his people once again.

It would be easy to say the miracle in the gospel  
was that Jesus got the people to share their lunch with the people around them.  
But that would underscore the true miracle of Jesus,  
providing, in abundance, for his people.

We can never forget the first reading,  
"Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters—there is enough for everyone.  
If you have no money—come eat and drink—it will not cost you anything."  
God is cast in the role of a street vendor,  
who offers plenty of food and drink to all who pass by—at no cost.

Remember what is happening.

In the gospel story Jesus took the five loaves and two fish,  
looked up to heaven, blessed them, broke them and gave them to the people.

At the Last Supper Jesus took the bread and wine, looked up to heaven,  
blessed them, broke them and gave them to his disciples.

Later in this celebration I will take bread and wine, look up to heaven,  
bless them, break them and give them to all who are present.

Jesus never looks at what we do not have--he looks at what we do have,  
and he takes the little we have, a little bit of bread and a little bit of wine,  
and at no cost to us...he is transforms them into his Body and Blood.

And we in turn, when we consume that Body and Blood,  
we are transformed into the body and blood of Jesus.

This is why the Eucharist that we celebrate is a sign of God's abundance.

There is always enough to go around. Everyone has a chance to eat their fill.

This is true on a Eucharistic level, and it is true on global level.

On a global level there is enough food to feed the hungry.

The problem is there are those with abundance, and there are those who have nothing.

It is easy, or should I say "Convenient" for us to forget the line from Scripture,

"From everyone to whom much has been given, much will be required;

and from the one to whom much has been entrusted, even more will be demanded.

(LK 12:48)

If this verse doesn't move us to a change of heart and right action,

then we have not understood the story of the loaves and fish...

that God's goodness is never intended for a select few.

Sometimes people look at the poverty in the world and think,

How can God allow that to happen?

I think God's response might be, "I am doing something about it—I made you!"