

EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY OT - A

One of the many victims of the COVID pandemic has been picnics.

How I love a good potluck when everyone brings a dish from home to share.

There is always enough food ... usually enough to fill a few take-home containers!

Each of our relatively small contributions - when brought together in generosity - become a feast to feed dozens.

The words of the prophet ring true as we gather: "All who are thirsty (or hungry) come without paying and without cost."

In today's Gospel, we are told that Jesus had pity on the crowd - he recognized their hunger, both for his words and for something to eat.

The ministry of Jesus and the ministry of the Church is to feed people, both physically and spiritually.

When the disciples want Jesus to dismiss the crowds, his response speaks volumes to all who wish to follow him: "Give them some food yourselves."

The disciples protest that they have only five loaves and two fish.

Jesus teaches them - and us - that if we bring to him the little we have, he will multiply it, and it will be more than enough.

Perhaps you are familiar with the tradition of praying the "Morning Offering"?

Whatever words we use it's a great practice to begin each day by handing over to the Lord all that we have and are -

- after all, they are God's gifts in the first place -

- and to ask God to use them to serve the Divine plan.

St. Paul reminds us that we can offer to God everything in our life, for nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Whatever we encounter during the day becomes an opportunity for grace when we place it trustingly in the hands of our loving God.

Notice in the Gospel that special mention is made of the fact that: "They all ate and were satisfied," and after the crowd of more than five thousand people were fed, the fragments left over filled twelve wicker baskets.

God is not the God of "just enough."

Our God is the God of abundance.

Grace, mercy, and all kinds of blessings flow freely for those who trust who trust that: "The hand of the Lord feeds us; God answers all our needs."

In the First Reading the Lord asks: "Why spend your money for what is not bread; your wages for what fails to satisfy?"

Where do we look for our security?

Using an image from the early days of the COVID pandemic we could ask:

In our fear of running out, how much "toilet paper" have we hoarded?

I bet the disciples flinched when Jesus asked them to share with the crowd what they had brought for their own dinner.

It is only when we trust in the Lord who is "gracious and merciful" that we have the freedom to be generous.

This miracle of the multiplication of the loaves and fish foreshadows the even greater gift and miracle of the Eucharist.

Jesus is willing to give all that he has and all that he is to feed a starving world.

The Eucharist is the memorial of his Paschal Mystery: the gift of eternal life that comes through self-emptying death.

Whenever you and I receive the Eucharist we pledge ourselves to live out that mystery.

You and I are called to allow ourselves to be broken and poured out in order to feed others.

And because of our Communion with the Risen Christ we will always have enough to give.

And nothing will ever separate us from the love of God.