

Homily – 18th Sunday of Normal Time - Cycle A

Matthew 14:13-21

Today's Gospel is one of the more well-known Gospels – The feeding of the 5,000.

At the start of our Gospel Jesus has just received the news of the **death of His cousin – John the Baptist**.

It's a sad time for Jesus and much like us, Jesus needs time **to be on His own** to grieve His loss.

We also see how the people who are always needing more from Jesus, follow Him – seeking His **Teaching and Healing**.

Matthew's then continues with the events of the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves and fishes.

To more fully understand these events, we need to look at them in context:

- Earlier in this Gospel, not read today, – we read of **Herod's banquet**,
 - Where there is **only the best & abundance** of food;
 - It is here that **John the Baptist** is beheaded
- On hearing the news, Jesus' first reaction is to **be alone and Pray**
 - Because Jesus has a **close bond** and special **love for John**.

Reading deeper into this passage, we see the great **contrast** between the **banquet of Herod** and the **feeding of the five thousand**:

1. Herod's banquet is filled with **opulence**, feeding those who are **self-satisfied** with their lives
2. But Jesus' feeds those who are hungry and **have no food** and who are seeking more than just something to eat

1. Herod presides as a **worldly, brutal** and **selfish king**
2. Jesus serves others as a **loving** and **generous Saviour, including the poor** who need so much.

In this reading we see the **great contrast** between the **values of this world** and the **values of the Kingdom of God**.

Homily – 18th Sunday of Normal Time - Cycle A

Matthew 14:13-21

There are many other messages that we can take from Jesus feeding the five thousand

- When Jesus speaks to the crowds
 - He speaks about God in a **different way**
 - He **treats people differently - Equally**
 - He knows that the people are not only hungry for food
 - But also that they **hunger for more of Him**, for more of God
 - Their Spiritual lives **need nourishment**

Our **Souls** too have the same need for **nourishment, and we all need the right spiritual food**

This miracle teaches us two important lessons:

- God will provide for our **practical needs**
- And God will provide for our **spiritual needs**

And just like those crowds, we too need to be **willing to follow** Jesus

- To want to **be with Him**
- To **listen to Him**
- To be **fed by Him.**

We find much symbolism in this event as well:

- Jesus first raises and blesses the **loaves and fish**
 - **Fish** – symbolic – “*Come to me and I will make you **fishers of men***”
 - **Loaves** – symbolic of the institution of the **Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist**
 - Just as Jesus would bless and **break the bread** at the Last Supper
 - To provide us with ongoing and **eternal spiritual food before His crucifixion**

Homily – 18th Sunday of Normal Time - Cycle A

Matthew 14:13-21

And we should not forget that this event could not take place without the **generosity of one person**. In John's Gospel he recounts a little boy who has 5 barley loaves and two fish:

- **The Generosity** of the little boy who has with him the two fishes and five loaves of bread
 - He has very little, **but gives it all up**, for the good of others
 - And as Jesus **works through this little boy, so too does He work through us to** help others
 - Today we need to be His **messengers**

What this Gospel also **emphasises** is:

- The total **inability of the disciples** to deal with a desperate situation on their own
- They would prefer to **send the problem away**
- **But, we rather see the ease** with which Jesus provides a solution.

In a Spiritual sense:

- Jesus shows His **compassion for** those who have followed Him
- Jesus **does not want the crowds to go, He knows they need Him and His teaching**
- He wants to feed them with **spiritual food** through the **Word of God**.
- By answering their call, the hungry **are enriched** with spiritual food that **heals their souls**.

By sending the crowds away, the disciples would have **denied the people** the opportunity of receiving these **gifts from Jesus**.

Homily – 18th Sunday of Normal Time - Cycle A

Matthew 14:13-21

And so we too are faced with the choice as to whether we want to satisfy ourselves with **the right food**

- Jesus calls us to **His mealtime of the Holy Mass**
- **Do we dare refuse to come?**

Because it is in the **Sacrifice of the Mass** that we are able meet Jesus in the fullest way possible in this life, really, truly and substantially by receiving His **Body and Blood** in the **Eucharist**.

We should take seriously **God's invitation** to be fed by him.

- He will **never withdraw** His invitation.
- He **offers Himself** to us in Holy Communion,
- But nothing can happen **unless we respond**.

In summary, the message of today's Gospel emphasises:

There is very **little we can do on our own**, we need to **let Jesus into our lives** to feed us spiritually.

Let us ask the Blessed Virgin Mary

Our Mother,

To intercede for us

That we may be like that little boy

And offer all we have, to Jesus

So that He may, through us,

use our gifts

To help those around us

In their time of need,

Whatever their need.