

23rd June 2019 (Body and Blood of Christ, Year C)

Genesis 14:18-20; Psalm 109(110):1-4; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26; Luke 9:11-17.

'Give them something to eat yourselves!'

While last week we were invited to pray, reflect and celebrate the mystery of God as Trinity, today we are invited to celebrate the mystery of the Body and Blood of Christ, in the Eucharist. We celebrate this mystery every time we come to Mass and eat and drink the food Jesus gives us, and we also live this mystery as, through our Baptism, we belong to the Body of Christ.

The gospel from Luke narrates the miracle of the feeding of a crowd of five thousand. The gospel passage says that there were five thousand men, not even counting the women and children! A big crowd has been following Jesus. First he feeds those following him with his Word; he speaks to them about the kingdom of God. Then he offers them physical nourishment. Each time we gather as the Body of Christ, we too are nourished first by God's word in scripture, and then by consuming the food and drink. Listening to and reflecting on God's word, is an integral part of the Eucharist. God forms us through his word and feeds us through his Body and Blood.

In today's gospel narrative, Jesus takes the bread, blesses it, breaks it and gives it out to the apostles to distribute. The verbs to take, bless, break and give describe actions linked to the celebration of the Last Supper meal and indicate that this narrative has very strong Eucharistic connotations. We know that the first Christians gathered, especially on Sunday, to listen to God's word and to share in the Eucharist. This gospel narrative is a description of what the community has always celebrated down the centuries; breaking the word of God and the breaking the bread.

The gospel explains to us that we are the ministers of the Body of Christ! Jesus does not provide the bread to be eaten, nor does he distribute it to those gathered. His action is to bless, break and give out, the rest of the work is done by those who are following him, listening to his word. It is the Twelve who point out that those who had been following Jesus are now hungry and need feeding, and in turn, Jesus commands them to feed the crowds! We are the ones who have stepped up to replace the Twelve as we follow Jesus and regularly listen to his word. Are we aware of the needs of those around us? Who are the people who need to be fed with God's Word and with his body? Pope Francis reminds us that the poor and the marginalised are the ones who show us the face of Jesus in our midst today! They are the ones who need our attention and need to be fed. How do we do this?

Again, it is not Jesus who provides the five loaves of bread and the two fish, but it is the disciples who offer them. This could have easily been their lunch. The Twelve could have hidden this small amount of food for them to enjoy when the crowds had dispersed! The Twelve were generous enough to place their poverty in Jesus' hands for him to multiply and feed the crowd. Today Jesus is still able to do his miracles; he can still feed those who are hungry for his word and for physical nourishment, but he requires our generosity. At times we feel inadequate, we are 'not good enough!' We only have a few loaves of bread and two pieces of fish, a ridiculous amount of food compared to the crowd hungering for food! Jesus says 'it is enough!' What Jesus needs is not abundance of food or expertise, he only needs our generosity and he will be able to do the rest. God can convert our poverty into abundance.

As a community of faith, as Body of Christ we often feel inadequate and discouraged. Perhaps we often ask: 'what can I possibly do with my little resources?' Jesus says: 'Give me your poverty and let me do the miracle!' All I need to do is to trust and allow God to be God!

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