

Homily for Sunday Mass, July 29, 2018
Year B - 17th Sunday in Ordinary Time John 6:1-15
----Father Mike Cadotte----

Every wonder why some fear new people coming into the country or seem to work to avoid programs that will raise people out of poverty or help them overcome institutional setbacks and discrimination that holds them back from the full potential that God has instore for them? I truly believe they are not some agent of pure evil, however, some do do it out of greed and fear. A fear that if more arrive at the level they are at they will have to give up some of what they have for them! The fact is rising tides, as they say, raise all ships and there is no need for such greedy childish fears. As adults we truly must put away childish ways. In our faith there is always room for one more. Jesus' compassionate heart is ever expanding and open to all that come at the detriment of none. We see this today in the pending arrival of nearly 20,000 – remembering the Bible account only counted men and not women and children. If God is always there ready to welcome the needy as in our Gospel reading or in the smaller crowd feed, by God, through Elisha, how can we NOT?

The crowds, like us, come to Jesus in need, hungry, tired, and without life sustaining food to keep themselves going. Jesus, who has been trying to avoid the crowds and get some down time sees the herd of humanity and takes pity on them. We are they. We are those that are in dire need of Jesus and He did not turn away from the crowd then, nor will He turn away from you. Rather He feeds us and there was, and ever will be, enough of Him for all.

And despite Jesus' exhaustion and desire to spend time with His Disciples He welcomes the crowd with an open heart. How open? Jesus instructs the large gathering to relax and recline in the soft green spring grass. To recline during a meal is the style of the time of family and invited friends at the meal table. Jesus is welcoming humanity as His friend, as one of His own – family.

And let us recall again where this scene is told in EVERY Gospel – up the mountain. A mountain in the Scriptures is the place where God comes to humanity. A mountain is the place where the law is given. A mountain is the place where Moses and Elijah and Peter, James, and John met God. Moses met God in thunder and crashings. John chooses a mountain with the purpose of saying that God is present. (Carol & Dennis Keller Volume2 Digest, Vol 52, Issue 4)

I would like to recount a story I read in a pastoral periodical written by Brian Gleeson that touches on being there for others like God is for us:

One Saturday morning Sue was roaming through the crowd at a garage sale when she noticed a young man looking at her intently. Catching her eye, he came up to her with an air of hesitancy and hope. 'Mrs. Lester?' he asked. 'Yes?' replied Sue, wondering how he knew her name.

'Mrs Lester,' he went on. 'I was hoping so much that I would see you when I came back to Florida.' Then he poured out his story. Years before, Tony had been a student where Sue was a teacher (and still taught). The school was 'the end of the road' on the socio-economic scale. As the locals put it, if the kids didn't make it there, the next stop was prison. Tony himself came from a poverty-stricken and dysfunctional home. The one

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bright spot in his life was the kindness and encouragement shown him by his teacher Mrs. Lester.

He said to Sue: 'Day after day, when everybody else was telling me I was stupid and bad, you would sit me down in your office and say: "Tony, you can do anything you want with your life if you set your mind to it." You even invited me and some of the other kids into your home.'

Tony had returned to Florida after recently graduating from the University of Michigan and was soon to start work as the business manager of a reputable firm.

The surprise reunion between teacher and former student continued in the middle of the garage sale, with Sue inviting Tony to come back to his old school to tell his story to the students there.

The lesson of sharing of one's self and loving all of humanity despite its obnoxiousness, its pettiness, its hardened hearts, and weak moralities, was not lost on our teach friend Sue. She looked past the physical and connected with the spiritual humanity of each of her kids. She lived the actions of Christ in her daily life.

I believe the Disciples did not lose sight of what happened that day on the mountain either, when humanity met up with God. You see, the leftovers of a meal, in Jewish culture of the time, were collected for slaves and the small scraps were called '*peah*.'

Now, here is an amazing hidden mystery in today's reading: the Greek word translated into "basket" in today's story has two possible meanings. In this account the Greek word used was *kophinos* which is a small, lunch-box-sized basket. Our hidden miracle is that the small amount of food offered feed the many thousands and yet we find ourselves with twelve *kophinos* (small baskets) left over for the Twelve, who have been serving the masses as slaves would do. Out of so little, so many were fed and yet still enough *peah* for the Twelve. My friends, do you see the significance here? Do you get it? Take some private time with this Gospel reading and consider all aspects and how they would fit into your life. It will be time well spent looking at the scriptural *peah* of today's reading and, with God's guidance, figuring out how they fit your life.

Finally, we are about to feed our own gathering today, here to meet God once again and be fed on of the body and blood of Jesus Christ. We recount Jesus giving thanks for the food on that mountain top, yes? Well the Greek word used to describe that 'giving thanks' is the word 'Eucharisteo.' Yes, my sisters and brothers, as we partake in the Eucharist we give thanks for our daily bread that is given so lovingly by Jesus, by God, to each of us.

So, let us as one, proclaim our faith on this mountain top. Let us bring to this Eucharistic table (where all are welcomed) our joys, sorrows, fears, failings, difficulties, and those broken parts of our lives as our Eucharisteo to God who can bear all things for us.

AMEN