

2024 B 17th Sunday in Ordinary Time July 28

Some of you, I know, had been through Hurricane Hugo in September 1989. The ferocious storm caused a lot of damage in Carolinas. There was a report of a story about a young couple in North Carolina who were set to open their own restaurant that day. The couple named their little restaurant “Our Place.”

The storm even made its way 200 miles inland in North Carolina to their small town. Trees were uprooted, power lines were down, homes and stores were destroyed. The next day the couple hurried to their restaurant to see if it had been affected. Fortunately, everything was intact.

A deputy sheriff pulled up to the couple’s restaurant and told them that their restaurant, the fire station next door and a service station down the road were the only ones that had electricity. They told the deputy, “Tell your coworkers and other emergency people you see that they will have free meals and coffee for anybody who comes by.” Soon firemen, policemen, linemen and other workers filing into their restaurant.

Then something amazing began to happen. People who happened by started cleaning the counters and sweeping the floors. Volunteers took over the dish washing. People from a nearby town that had not been hit too badly by the storm heard what was happening and they brought food from their freezers. Nearby merchants also have heard, and they responded with foodstuffs of all kinds. And as the day went by, they served 16, 000 meals. A miracle occurred that day in that town, a miracle of love in abundance.

It all sounds kind of familiar, doesn’t it? A little bit of food stretches into a great deal of food. Today’s Jesus’ miracle of feeding the multitude takes place near the sea of Galilee. By the thousands, people came searching for Jesus. They came out of the cul-de-sacs and office complexes of their day.

Why did the people come to Jesus in such numbers?

They brought him, their burdens of their life and gave them. And he gave them not religion, not doctrine, not systems, but rest. As a result, they called him Lord. As a result, they called him Savior. They came to Jesus weary with the futility of life. A rejected woman. A confused man. Disoriented young man. Discouraged missionary. They all found rest. They found anchor points for their storm-tossed souls. And they found that Jesus was the only man to walk God’s earth who claimed to have answer for man’s burdens. **“Come to me,”** he invited them with open hands and heart.

My prayer is that you, too, will find rest in Christ. And that you will sleep like a baby.

Jesus saw the crowd and said to Philip, “Where can we buy enough food for them to eat?” Good question. How were they to be fed? There was no McDonald’s nearby, no Wendy’s or Burger King. Philip’s answer means – even if there had been a carry-out nearby there wasn’t enough money in the treasury to feed that crowd.

Then the disciple Andrew spoke up saying, “Here is a boy with five loaves and two fish, but how far will they go among so many?”

I would like to ask young boys or girls here this morning/ evening/ afternoon like this boy with five loaves in the gospel today ... “What do you have this morning/ evening/ afternoon to offer something to Jesus? ...

The boy in the gospel offered his lunch box to Jesus and Jesus said thanks to the boy and the heavenly Father for the boy’s generosity and fed the crowd.

I want to let you the boys and girls that you are important part of the church’s life. I want the parents and the church community to know what you would do with our children? They are worth whatever effort we put into supplying them with a first-rate Christian education. I encourage you to step forward to commit to be a catechist to impart Catholic doctrine and way of life to the children to form them for the future. Boys and girls matter in our lives. They matter to the parents and the church. We need to do whatever we can to help them to grow in the knowledge and love of Jesus Christ.

Indeed, everyone in the pews of every age has something to offer to God. Someone wisely said **“Our life is God’s gift to us. What we make of life is our gift to God.”** Every one of us has something to offer God.

That day, thousands of people were fed and when the leftovers were gathered, they filled twelve baskets. The effect of this miracle was electric on the crowd. They said, “A prophet has come into the world,” and they wanted to make him a king.”

Jesus is looking for persons whose gift of oneself he can magnify and multiply.

That is how God always works. That is Jesus’ plan for the redemption of this world. Each of us, young and old let us offer ourselves as a gift to Christ and give thanks for having played a small part in God’s victory.

Can you imagine the young lad who offered his lunch box to Jesus and looking what happened how he felt? What we all have to do is to give Jesus what God has blessed us with.