



EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

In this Sunday's gospel from St Matthew (Mt 14:13-21), Jesus feeds the 5,000 people who have been following him. The miracle is one of both compassion and generosity for the people who are hungry.

Giving is at the heart of the gospel. Basically, there are two types of giving: one where the giver gives what they can live without. While it is always worthwhile to give to others, there is another type of giving. The other type of giving which calls us to make a real sacrifice or commitment in our giving to others.

St Mother Teresa of Calcutta, worked among the slums of Calcutta where some of the poorest people in the world lived. On one occasion she came across a Hindu family who hadn't eaten for days. St Teresa took a small quantity of rice and gave it to the family. To her surprise the mother of the family, divided the rice into two halves, and took half of the rice next door and gave it to a Muslim family. St Teresa said to the mother: "You may not have enough for yourselves." The mother replied, "But they haven't eaten for days either." It is often in these most challenging of times that we find our strength to give so freely.

This is what happens in our gospel scene today. The miracle of the loaves is made possible by the giving of five loaves and two fish. In St John's gospel the giver is a small boy (Jn 6:9). We can see from this that he offers Jesus all he has without holding back. It is the disciples who are so unappreciative of the gift they have been given by the boy, because they ask: 'What is that between so many?'

But, Jesus tells the disciples to get the people to sit down on the ground. After Jesus give thanks, he then gets the disciples to distribute the food amongst the people to eat. The gospel says they all had as much as they

wanted. While we appreciate how Jesus feeds us, it was uncommon for the people to share their food with others. This is part of the miracle.

The writer Henry Ward Beecher once wrote: 'Every tomorrow has two handles. We can take hold of it with the handle of anxiety, or with the handle of faith.' The miracle was a lesson for the disciples, that with 'faith' we can turn what appears to be an overwhelming problem into an action guided by divine love for others.

St Teresa of Calcutta, was prompted in her generosity toward others to give what little she had to feed the hungry and starving, but her turn of generosity gave rise to even more generosity. With faith, the meal is always giving, like the Body of Jesus which is continually given for us at Mass.

When we receive the Body of Jesus, the nourishment which he gives will express itself in our willingness to give to others.

[Fr Kelvin](#)