

Our world is a hungry world. There are more people who do not have enough to eat than those that do. Chances are you would not have to look very far to find someone who is truly hungry. Four days a week, folks who are hungry come to LCM for food. In a few minutes you will hear how the Walk-in Ministry meets the needs of those folks. Perhaps they are hungry for more than food. In today's Gospel lesson, Jesus performs a miracle of incredible proportion. How did he feed them?

Jesus got into the boat and sailed across the Sea of Galilee. There were times when Jesus needed to get away from the crowds for rest and for prayer. In addition, he needed time alone with the disciples so he could lead them to a deeper understanding of who he was. All over people had been watching with astonishment the things he had done. As they watched him sail away, they hurriedly went around the end of the lake to the place where they expected Jesus would come ashore. At first, Jesus went up into the hill behind the plain to sit and rest with his disciples. It wasn't long before the crowd began to arrive. At the sight of their growing numbers, Jesus began to feel sympathy towards them. He could tell they were hungry and tired and needed to be fed.

Philip was the natural one for Jesus to ask where nourishment could be found since he was from the area of Bethsaida, the area where they were. Philip's answer was despairing as he said it would cost 6 months wages to obtain food for this many people. Then Andrew appeared on the scene. A boy had come

to Andrew with the few loaves of barley bread and some fish that he had in his basket. Barley bread was the bread of the poor and the fish he had were small sardine like pickled fish.

After he had asked the folks to sit down, he took the loaves and fishes and blessed them. The blessing he used would have been the one that was used in all Jewish homes. "Blessed art thou of Lord, our God who causest to come forth bread from the earth." The people ate and were filled. Jesus then asked the disciples to gather up what was left. At Jewish festivals, it was customary to gather leftovers to give to the servants. The disciples were able to fill 12 baskets; one for each of them. Nomadic Jews which the disciples were, carried a basket with them with the provisions they would need to survive.

The Gospel does not give us the exact details of what happened on that grassy plain that day. I believe we can look at this miracle in 3 possible ways. The first is that Jesus performed a miracle that transformed 5 barley loaves and 2 little fish into enough to feed a multitude of more than 5,000 people. However, if we recall Matthew 4:3-4, Jesus refused the request from the devil to turn stones into bread for his own nourishment. Also, in the OT, we know that God gave the Israelites manna enough for each day while they were living in the desert.

Another possibility may be this meal was a sacramental meal. It could be this morsel each one received satisfied their need for

food. The presence of Jesus and the reality of God, transformed the small morsel into something that richly nourished their hearts and souls as it does ours when we received the Eucharist at the communion table.

My favorite though is the third explanation. It is hard to believe that this multitude of people would have departed on a journey without taking along some provisions. Initially, each one might have been thinking selfishly of keeping what he had for himself. It may have been then, that Jesus with that knowing smile of his, brought forth what the young lad had offered. When he prayed and gave thanks, perhaps those with food did as Jesus had done and began sharing what they had. Everyone was fed with the available supply. In the end there was more than enough for everyone and more.

It may be that the real miracle was the loving gift from a young boy then the blessing of Jesus which then turned the crowd of selfish men and women into a blessed fellowship of sharers. It just may be this story represents the biggest miracle of all; a miracle story of a change not only of the loaves and fishes, but of the hearts and souls of those men and women.

Other than Jesus, there were two heroes in this story. The first was Andrew, who said, "I'll see what I can do and I will trust Jesus to do the rest." Andrew didn't know what the result would be of bringing the boy to Jesus, but he was

providing material for a miracle. We too do not know what will happen when we bring someone or something to Jesus.

There is a tale of an old German schoolmaster, who when he came to class every day would bow ceremoniously to his students. When someone asked why, he said, "You never know who one of these young men will become someday." One of those students was Martin Luther.

The young lad didn't have much to offer but he gave all that he had to Jesus. Jesus needs what we can bring. It may not be much. It may well be that the world is denied miracle after miracle and triumph after triumph because we do not bring to Jesus what we have and who we are. If we lay ourselves on the altar of his service, there is no end of what God can do with us and through us. Little can be turned into much in the hands of Christ.

Today we are emphasizing the Walk-in Ministry here at LCM. I would like to introduce you to Melissa Spyrison, the site coordinator.

Jesus can take whatever we have to give and make something great out of it. If we offer nothing to God, God will not have anything with which to work. In performing miracles, Jesus preferred to work through people. In today's Gospel, he took what the boy offered and used it to accomplish one of the most spectacular miracles ever recorded. At certain times in our

lives, we may feel insignificant and useless; we are surrounded by people with more money and greater talent than ours. We are tempted in our weaker moments to just sit back and let others do the work. We reason that what we have to offer won't make much difference anyway.

God gives in abundance. God takes whatever we can offer of our time, ability and resources and multiplies its effectiveness beyond our wildest expectations. If each one of us takes a step toward making ourselves available to God, God will show us how greatly we can be used to advance the work of God's kingdom. Jesus changed the offered bread into more bread. Each ate until they were satisfied.

No matter how much amazing grace the Lord bestows on each of us, there is always more than enough. God is never impoverished by God's generosity. When they were filled, Jesus said to his disciples, "Gather up the leftover fragments so that nothing will be lost." So they gathered them up and filled twelve baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves which were left over by those who had eaten. Yes, ours is a hungry world. Jesus came to satisfy that hunger. Not just the hunger in our belly, but the hunger for purpose and meaning. Jesus feeds us in the Holy Eucharist with bread and wine, that we may be satisfied even to eternal life. Jesus gives us himself. As we are fed so also we are invited to feed one another. As you heard from Melissa, the Walk-on Ministry needs help. What can you give? How will we feed them?

