

EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME - YEAR A

[Isaiah 55.1-3; Romans 8.35, 37-39; Matthew 14:13-21]
Excerpts from Pope Francis - Angelus - 03 August 2014
by Father Charles Fillion
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Brothers and sisters, this Sunday's Gospel presents to us three messages from the miracle of the multiplication of loaves and fish. The first is *compassion*. In facing the crowd who follows him and — so to speak — “won't leave him alone”, Jesus does not react with irritation. He does not say: “These people are bothering me”. No. He reacts with a feeling of compassion, because he knows they are not seeking him out of curiosity but out of need. But attention: compassion — which Jesus feels — is not simply feeling pity; it's more! It means to *suffer with*, in other words to empathize with the suffering of another, to the point of taking it upon oneself. Jesus is like this: he suffers together with us, he suffers with us, he suffers for us. And the sign of this compassion is the healing of countless people he performed. Jesus teaches us to place the needs of the poor before our own.

Our needs, even if legitimate, are not as urgent as those of the poor, who lack the basic necessities of life. We often speak of the poor. But when we speak of the poor, do we sense that this man or that woman or those children lack the bare necessities of life? That they have no food, they have no clothing, they cannot afford medicine.... Also, that the children do not have the means to attend school. Whereas our needs, although legitimate, are not as urgent as those of the poor who lack life's basic necessities.

The second message is *sharing*. It's helpful to compare the reaction of the disciples with regard to the tired and hungry people, with that of Jesus. They are different. The disciples think it would be better to send them away so they can go and buy food. Jesus instead says: “you give them something to eat”. Two different reactions, which reflect two contrasting outlooks: the disciples reason with worldly logic, by which each person must think of himself; they reason as if to say: “Sort it out for yourselves”. Jesus reasons with God's logic, which is that of sharing.

How many times we turn away so as not to see our brothers and sisters in need! And this looking away is a polite way to say, “Sort it out for yourselves”. This is not Jesus' way: this is selfishness. Had he sent away the crowds, many people would have been left with nothing to eat. Instead, those few loaves and fish, shared and blessed by God, were enough for everyone. This isn't magic, it's a “sign”: a sign that calls for faith in God, our provident Father, who does not let us go without “our daily bread”, if we know how to share it as brothers and sisters.

Compassion, sharing. And the third message: the miracle of the loaves foreshadows the *Eucharist*.

It is seen in the gesture of Jesus who, before breaking and distributing the loaves, “blessed” them.

It is the same gesture that Jesus was to make at the Last Supper, when he established the perpetual memorial of his Redeeming Sacrifice. In the Eucharist Jesus does not give just any bread, but *the* bread of eternal life. He gives Himself, offering Himself to the Father out of love for us. But we must go to the Eucharist with those sentiments of Jesus, which are compassion and the will to share. One who goes to the Eucharist without having compassion for the needy and without sharing, is not at ease with Jesus.

Compassion, sharing, Eucharist. This is the path that Jesus points out to us in this Gospel. A path which brings us to face the needs of this world with fraternity, but which leads us beyond this world, because it comes from God the Father and returns to Him.