Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)

Gospel text (*Mt* 14,13-21): When Jesus heard of the death of John the Baptist, he withdrew in a boat to a deserted place by himself. The crowds heard of this and followed him on foot from their towns. When he disembarked and saw the vast crowd, his heart was moved with pity for them, and he cured their sick.

When it was evening, the disciples approached him and said, “This is a deserted place and it is already late; dismiss the crowds so that they can go to the villages and buy food for themselves.” He said to them, “There is no need for them to go away; give them some food yourselves.” But they said to him, “Five loaves and two fish are all we have here.”

Then he said, “Bring them here to me,” and he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, he said the blessing, broke the loaves, and gave them to the disciples, who in turn gave them to the crowds. They all ate and were satisfied, and they picked up the fragments left over– twelve wicker baskets full. Those who ate were about five thousand men, not counting women and children.

«Bring them here to me»

Fr. Roger J. LANDRY
(Hyannis, Massachusetts, United States)

Today, Jesus shows us just how much He wants to involve us in his saving work. He who had created the heavens and the earth out of nothing, could have easily created a rich banquet from nothing to satiate the multitudes. But He preferred to work the miracle starting with the best his disciples could give him. “Five loaves and two fish are all we have here.” (Mt 14:17), they said. “Bring them here to me” (Mt 14:18), Jesus replied. The Lord was able to multiply that meager donation —not enough even to feed a typical family— to nourish about 5,000 families.

The Lord showed the same protocol at the wedding feast of Cana. He who created all the seas could easily have filled the six 30-gallon containers with choice wine from scratch. But He again wanted to involve his creatures in the miracle, by having them fill the containers with water first.

We see the same principle in the celebration of the Eucharist. Jesus begins not from nothing, nor from grain and grapes, but from bread and wine, which already contain within the work of human hands.

The late Cardinal François Xavier Nguyen van Thuan, imprisoned from 1975-1988 by the Vietnamese communists, wondered how he could further Christ's kingdom and care for his flock while undergoing the brutal suffering of solitary confinement. He realized he might not be able to do much from a prison cell, but at least each day he could offer to the Lord his “five loaves and two fish,” and let God do the rest. The Lord multiplied those little efforts into a witness that has inspired not only the Vietnamese but the whole Church.

Today the Lord is asking us, his modern disciples, to give the crowds something to eat (cf. Mt 14:16). No matter how much or how little we have, let us give it to the Lord and let him take it from there.