

18th Sunday Ordinary A

The Lord cares for all our needs. He cares for our spiritual and material needs. The first reading of today is an invitation to the Jews who had been exiled in Babylon for 50 years. Most Jewish people then living in exile had not seen their homeland in Jerusalem. But they heard stories of it and yearned to go back. Their liberation and return happened through the benevolence of Persian king Cyrus who was able to defeat the Babylonians. Through the Persian king, God fulfilled his promise to bring his people back to their land. He invites the hungry, the thirsty, and the oppressed to come to him to be fed.

The gospel of today takes that message further. The gospel says, “Jesus was moved with pity seeing the crowd.” The disciples wanted Jesus to send the crowd away because they were hungry and the disciples did not have food to give to them. But Jesus asked them to give them food themselves. To their knowledge there was only one boy who had some food—five loaves of bread and two fish. When the boy shared what he had, the Lord multiplied that and fed five thousand people—not counting women and children.

This is what happens when we generously share what we have. The Lord multiplies what we have. If we give to the Lord 1% of what we have, he will multiply it and give us 2%. If you give him 5% of what you have, he will multiply that and give you 10%. The Lord is always generous. But his generosity depends on our generosity. Studies show that the national average tithing among Catholics in the U.S. is 1.4%, whereas it is 4% among the Protestants. When Mother Teresa began her work, all that she had was 5 rupees—or 50 cents. But the Lord multiplied that. The Lord is generous and compassionate. What restricts His generosity is our generosity.

To be generous, a person has to be in a state of sanctifying grace. We might hear stories of generosity or sermons on generosity, but if we are not in a state of sanctifying grace those stories and sermons will not bear fruits. Today’s gospel is about the generosity of the boy who placed in the hands of Jesus all he had.

Generosity is also the outcome of love—our love for God. We share our resources generously with people we love and the causes we love. Giving to God is an indication of our love for him. What matters is not the amount but the sacrifices we make. Our giving has to be sacrificing.

During Lent of 2017, I received a letter from someone in Washington State with a check in it. The letter said, “Father, this year our family decided to forgo our vacation trip to Bend. So we would like to donate that money to the needs of your Church.” This is sacrifice.

One spring I had gone to Santa Rosa, California, and stayed with a couple who used to have a house in La Pine. It was a one-bedroom rented house. I asked her why they did not think about having a two-bedroom house. She responded, “We can afford a two-bedroom house, but living in a one-bedroom house helps us to give more to the Church.” This is sacrifice.

So, let us remember to share God’s blessings with him.