

17th Sunday in the Ordinary Time

When we approach Jesus in deep faith, he can change us from selfish persons into compassionate and generous sharers of our little resources with his divine power, we can satisfy the physical and spiritual hunger of many.

Our God is a generous and compassionate God, who satisfies physical and spiritual hunger of people through his Son, Jesus. In today's gospel, we see a compassionate Jesus, who is very sensitive to the physical hunger of people, who were flocking to him. Today's gospel message invites us to become sensitive to hunger and poverty around us and share our bread and resources with the hungry and the needy.

It is estimated more than 850 million people go to bed every day without food and a child dies of hunger every 3 seconds around the world. What a world of contrasts we live in: When so many people including children go to bed every day with hungry stomachs in some parts of the world, so much food is wasted in lavish parties and banquets in some other parts; when so many starve in one region, so much food is thrown away in another. Some of the luxurious banquets and parties make us wonder, whether people live to eat or eat to live. Our world can be a better place, if we decide to share something of what we waste. The continuity of hunger in the world is an imperfection on its economic, scientific and technological progress in so many fields. Our parties and banquets can become God's banquet of love, only when we share our resources with the needy.

But we should remember people are hungry not only for bread. As we have already noted, this miracle is a 'sign' that indicates Jesus' role in satisfying our spiritual hunger as well. Mother Teresa said: "Being unwanted, unloved, uncared for....is a much greater hunger, a much greater poverty than the person who has nothing to eat." We are called to feed people with the spiritual values as well. One does not live by bread alone (Mt 4:4). People need to be fed with bread as well as love, care, truth and peace. As explained above, this miracle has strong Eucharistic implications. The Eucharist satisfies our spiritual hunger and motivates us to share our goods with the needy.

Our mission is to bring others to Jesus, so that, he may do, what he wants with them. Andrew is famous in John's gospel for bringing people to Jesus. In the beginning, he brought his brother Simon Peter to Jesus after his experience of staying with him (Jn 1:40-42) and later brought some Greeks to Jesus who wanted to see him (Jn 12:20-22). In today's gospel, he brings a boy in the crowd, who was generous enough to give the little food he had brought for himself.

We notice a contrast between the attitudes of Andrew and Philip in today's text. Philip thought that the whole situation was hopeless. According to him, nothing could be done because they had nothing with them. But Andrew said something was there (five barley loaves and two fish) with a boy in the crowd, though it is not sufficient for all. Needless to say what a wonder happened, when he brought that boy to Jesus and placed his little resource before Jesus. Introducing people to Jesus and his values, especially the value of sharing, what we have is a very important mission for parents, children, teachers, preachers, pastors and missionaries.

We need to place into God's hands or into his service whatever little resources we have and he can do wonderful things out of his abundance. When we generously share something we have, our resources and joys are multiplied. The unnamed boy in the crowd is a model for us to give, what we have to Jesus then he multiplies it to satisfy the needs of many. We should give not only from our abundance but also from our poverty. When we willingly part with a little thing, a little time, energy and resource which we have, we are able to relieve the misery and suffering of many people. If all of us could share the little we have, there would be enough for all. In our world, *"there is enough for everybody's need, but not for everybody's greed"*!

Let us Pray: O compassionate Jesus, grant that we may be very sensitive to the hunger and struggles of those who don't have food and other basic necessities of life. Increase in us the virtue of sharing our resources. We want to place our little resources into your hands and pray that you may multiply them according to your will. Teach us to give, share and care, instead of receiving only. Teach us to share not only our material things, but also time, energies, knowledge, talents and values of love, sacrifice, truth, peace and justice. Amen.