

July 29, 2018 16<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary time

A young man saw an elderly couple sitting down for lunch at McDonald's. He noticed that they ordered one meal for both of them and an empty drink cup. As he watched, the gentleman carefully divided the hamburger in two, counted out the fries one for her one for him one for her one for him, until they each had half. Then he poured half of the soft drink and set it before his wife. The old man began to eat and his wife sat there with her hands in her lap, waiting. The young man decided to ask if they would allow him to purchase another meal so they didn't have to split their's. The gentleman said, "Oh no, we've been married for 50 years and everything has always been and will always be a 50-50 split." The young man then asked the wife if she was going to eat. She replied, "It's his turn with the teeth."

In our first reading this afternoon, Elisha performs a miracle of multiplication. 20 barley loaves for 100 people and all of them had enough to eat. Many times in the Old Testament we see a pre-figurement. In movies we call it a preview of coming attractions. Elisha is a preview of coming attractions for the Messiah, for Jesus. It shows what God can do with not enough. We don't think it's enough, we don't think it will be sufficient, but then God shows us it's more than enough. God is so gracious, merciful, and generous, when he does something there's leftovers. We see in the gospel that this is the story that Elisha was prefiguring or "a coming attraction" for Jesus. 5000 men, total with women and children we figure 20,000 people. If you just figure the 5000 you're missing the point, you're missing the whole story. Families went everywhere together. So we see that there's 20,000 of these people. This is mostly agreed on by all the Scripture scholars. People follow Jesus wherever he goes. This time they're out in the middle of nowhere. They're not near a village, they're not near a town, but then again, there is no McDonald's at this time. There is no Burger King; there is no restaurant. Once in a while you would find an inn that would feed you, otherwise you are responsible for bringing your own food. The inn had this big straw mattress in the middle of a big room and everybody slept on it; all the strangers. A lot of people didn't like to travel because of that. But Jesus looks at the disciples and sees Philip. Philip will tell you the truth no matter what. Philip has no guile, he's not going to make things up, he's not very imaginative, he's *feet on the ground*. "Philip, how are we going to feed them?" Because Jesus knows you can't teach someone whose stomach is grumbling because of hunger. You have to feed them first. You can't teach someone who's tired, you've got to let them rest first. Philip is like, "Are you kidding me, Lord?" But Jesus asks him, "Philip where can we buy enough food?" Right there Jesus says it's going to be Me and you, not just Me. Me and you. This is a coming attraction for us; but later, more on that. Then they say, this little boy who must've been a Boy Scout before they existed, because he's prepared. He brought food. *Always be prepared*, is the Boy Scout motto. He brought food. He's got five barley loaves, he's very well prepared. But yet you've got 20,000 people and five loads. Jesus performs a miracle so great, that this miracle stuck in everybody's mind. All four Gospels mention it. Very seldom do we find a story that's mentioned in all four. But it's mentioned actually six different times in the four Gospels. Four times because Jesus was talking to Jews and twice because he was talking to non-Jews. And they have left overs, 12 wicker baskets, meaning enough for the world. Now, we can look at this story and say this is a story about the Mass. Or we can say this is a story about the generosity of God. But it really is a story about doing God's will.

A priest that worked in China many years ago had very little success in getting people to come to church, because they were meeting in a mud hut. Yosan was an old Chinese Christian who worked in the rice fields and lived alone in poverty on a boat in the river. He came to the mission one day and said, "Father, wouldn't it be good if we could build a real church instead of this mud hut?" "Indeed it would,"

Father said, "But it would take a long time to raise the money." "Father," said Yosan, "I would like to pay for the building of this church." Father said, "I'm sure you want to contribute your share when we have the fundraiser." "No," Yosan said, "I want to pay for it all." He said that's impossible, the cost will be equivalent to \$5000. In our terms, \$5 million. Yosan said he knew that and then he reached in and pulled out \$5000 worth of cash. Yosan had to explain because Father's mouth had hit the ground. He said years ago when he was a young man and receiving instruction in the faith, he heard a missionary say, "Hallowed be Thy name." It means our purpose is to give glory to God. Hearing this he desired to build a temple one day for God. So, for 40 years with no family, living in poverty, eating just a small amount of rice each day, he put away his wages until he had \$5000. The priest said, "Oh no I can't take that, you need something for your old age." Yosan said, "No Father, God will take care of me. The priest took the money and built the church. When the church was built it was packed, standing room only. After the Mass Yosan stayed in church kneeling, praying. Hours later, somebody went to check and they found him kneeling and dead. He had died of a joyful heart, because his dream had been realized. Yosan realized it doesn't take a lot when you've got God working for you. Now you could have changed his name to Father Branson. You could have put 15 million in there for the church. And I could make this a story about tithing and I could make it about contributions, but I'm not. Because it really is a story about how we think of ourselves. Most of the time we look at the problems in the world and we say, "I can't do anything about it, what can I do?" We see the hungry, we see problems with the immigrants and being separated from their families, we see all the problems that are in our country today and in the world. We say, "What can I do? I'm just one person." But then you have to look at the Saints; Mother Teresa, you have to look at the little boy that has no name because otherwise he'd be the patron saint of Boy Scouts. We have all these people that gave what little they could do. And God multiplied it beyond imagination. All we have to do is give a little bit. God can multiply it like crazy. This means service in the church, it means contributions in the church, it means service in our community, it means contributions to charity. It means smiling at some who has had a bad day. It means all kinds of little things. I see a woman with a tag sticking out of the back of her blouse. I walk up and I whisper I say, "Your tag is sticking out can I put it back in?" The joy on her face is beyond imagining. I can't imagine why that would be such a big thing but she is oh so thankful. "Oh thank you!" All that kind of stuff. I didn't do hardly anything. And yet, I was doing it out of Christian love for her. And look what happened. It happens time and time again. I'll see somebody and I'll say, "Are you having a bad day?" "Yes Father, I'm having a bad day." "Do you want me to bless you?" "Ohhhh Father!!!" To me it's just (makes sign of the cross). But with grace, God takes it and it's a massive thing. God can do many things, great things. God took me 6 1/2 years ago and said, "You're going to leave a little mining town." And Bishop said. "Yeah, because you're go going to build a parish." And it's just been baby steps. I don't think it's anything significant, but you guys keep telling me what a great thing it was. I didn't build it, God built it. Just like in Yosans' story today. We have to stop thinking that we can't do anything. We have to stop thinking, "I'm so insignificant nothing will work." Because, if we do it out of Christian love, if we do it out of concern, if we do it out of the glory of God (like building that Temple the house of God, that Yosan did) then God can magnify it beyond imagining. Who would have ever thought, in the history of the human race, five loaves of bread would feed 20,000. And yet, now we know that can happen. Now we know those miracles can happen and they happen over and over again. We have to get out of the negative rut. We have to get out of our insecurities. We have to get out of the fact that we are so little. We have to realize that yeah, I might be little but with God anything is possible.

God bless you

