

**17<sup>th</sup> SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME; Cycle – B; July 28<sup>th</sup> 2024**  
**2Kings 4:42-44; Ephesians 4:1-6; John 6:1-15**

Dear Sisters & Brothers,

So far we have been listening to the gospel of Mark for our Sunday Liturgy. But starting on this Sunday, for the next four more weeks we are going to listen to John's gospel chapter 6 which is known as the **Eucharistic discourse of Jesus**. John is the only Evangelist who gives such valuable information about the Eucharist, the Body and Blood of Jesus, through the direct words of Jesus. As we proceed with this chapter we will learn more about the importance of the Eucharist in our life.

John begins today's gospel with the account of the multiplication of bread. The same miracle we see in the synoptic gospels (Mt, Mk and Lk) too. Then we may wonder why does Church select the account of John instead of Mark? The reason is that John's account is more important for the Scripture Scholars as it stands as a prelude to the great Eucharistic discourse of Jesus. *In John the multiplication of the five barley loaves and two fish, by which Jesus fully satisfied the physical hunger of 5000 men, is the pre-figuration of the Eucharistic meal, by which Jesus will satisfy the spiritual hunger of millions of men and women in future.* Only John connects this miracle with the Eucharistic meal.

Normally, we never see Jesus seeking the advice or the opinion of his disciples before he worked a miracle. **But in this miracle, on the contrary, Jesus asked Philip whether he could find a way to feed the crowd.** Philip seems to be sympathetic towards the concern of Jesus, but he looks to be more practical and logical in his opinion. So he concluded that feeding a big crowd is an impossible task. Andrew's revelation that a boy has five loaves of barley bread and two fish is also apparently a useless one as the crowd was huge. But Andrew seems to be more optimistic than Philip. Perhaps he remembered the wedding at Cana, where Jesus converted the water into wine and thought that Jesus could do something. In this miracle, we have a few characters involved. We see Jesus on one side; the helpless Philip and Andrew on the other side. *Finally we have the little boy who is the hero and ready to part with his five loaves and two fish.* Perhaps there were many who had at least one time meal with them. But they were not ready to part with the bread. If wanted Jesus could have created bread from nowhere and feed the crowd. But he wanted the cooperation of the people.

There are situations in our life when we are surrounded by problems we too feel like Philip and Andrew who thought that nothing would work. Sometimes we turn to

Jesus and look for a miracle from him. Often, we never imagine that Jesus is expecting our co-operation to work the miracle for us. In fact he is looking for the **five loaves from us**. We may wonder, what can we offer to Jesus? But we forget the fact that *our five loaves are our sufferings, frustration and anxieties, physical ailments, untimely loss of a dear one, financial burdens etc.* **Together with these, we can also offer our gratitude, praise and glory to the Lord.** When we offer them to the Lord he can convert them into blessing and healing for us. Then a real miracle happens.

These days many people complain that they don't get anything out of the Mass in which they participate or the prayer they offer. *But they have to examine and see what they have brought to Church to offer Jesus.* When we come to the Eucharistic celebration, if we can offer ourselves to Jesus with our strength and weakness, no doubt, he will have something to offer us in return. Then we will never go out of the Church empty handed and we will find meaning in the Mass and prayers.

When Jesus called Peter to be his apostle, what he had with him to offer Jesus was only **his sinful life and weakness**. But Jesus made him the head of the Church; the woman who came to anoint Jesus offered him something more pleasing than the perfume and **that was her tears of repentance** by which she washed the feet of Jesus and she went back blessed; the prostitute woman had nothing to offer Jesus other than **her utter shame and humiliation**; she too went back as a new person. Indeed, they offered their weakness to Jesus and he converted it to be their strength. **Yes, when you and I are ready to part with our five barley loaves, the good Lord will work a miracle for us.** But we should willingly part with them. If we come to him empty handed, we will go out of the Church empty handed and the Eucharist or personal prayers will never give us any meaning.

This same attitude we need to keep in building our community physically and spiritually. When need arises to build something for the good of the community many people back up thinking that they don't have any talent or money to offer and the little they have will be only a drop of water in a big bucket. Remember, a big bucket is filled with such drops. When we are willing to part with our material resources, talents and time for a good cause, no matter how small they are, Jesus can multiply them and the impossible becomes possible.