

18th Sunday per Annum - B  
Exodus 16:2-4, 12-15;  
Ephesians 4:17, 20-24;  
John 6:24-35  
Little Flower - 8/4/24

My Brothers and Sisters,

During the second year of the Lectionary, the current year, most of the Sunday Gospels come from Mark. As I mentioned last week, because Mark's Gospel is the shortest Gospel, from the 17<sup>th</sup> to the 21<sup>st</sup> Sundays in Ordinary Time, the Gospel readings come from the sixth chapter of St. John's Gospel, the multiplication of the loaves and fish and Jesus' Eucharistic Discourse.

Over the years, there has been some debate over the miracle itself. Were there really only five barley loaves and two fish which Jesus multiplied to feed more than five thousand people, or did Jesus multiply the loaves and fish by opening the hearts of all those who had brought food to share their food with others through a young boy who was willing to share his loaves and fish? In other words, the multiplication of the loaves and fish challenges our understanding of miracles.

In 1986, a young man from Bloomington was hospitalized in neuro-intensive care at Methodist Hospital with a traumatic head injury from a motorcycle accident. His grandmother showed me a homily her minister had given that Sunday morning. He suggested that there are four kinds of miracles.

The first kind of miracle is the physical miracle in which God or Jesus overturns the laws of nature. These are the kinds of miracles that we read about in the Gospels, such as bringing the dead back to life after three days, curing a man born blind, or multiplying five loaves and two fish. For the most part, these are the kinds of miracles that are required for a saint to be canonized.

The second kind of miracle is when God works through people to bring about physical cures or to touch people's lives. We immediately think of the skills of surgeons, doctors, and nurses when people with a 2% chance of survival recover completely. We think about the advances in medicine, science, and technology that benefit people throughout the world. We think about chance encounters that have changed people's lives for the better.

The third kind of miracle is when God changes minds and hearts. For example, we think of young people who have been injured in an accident and remain paralyzed but do not despair but go on to live rich, full lives and make a real contribution to family and society.

Finally, we are all going to die, and death might be the greatest miracle of all. When we die, we pass through death to eternal life. As the Preface for the Dead reminds us, "Lord, for your faithful people life is changed, not ended. When the body of our earthly dwelling lies in death we gain an everlasting dwelling place in heaven."

The point is that there are many kinds of miracles. If we only look for the miracles that contradict the laws of nature, the physical miracles, we will fail to see some of the greatest miracles that surround us. In today's Gospel, Jesus rebuked the people: *"Amen, amen, I say to you, you are looking for me not because you saw signs but because you ate the loaves and were filled."* If we open our eyes, signs of God's presence, power, and activity are all around us and within us. Therefore, I would suggest that all of us spend some time this week thinking about the miracles in our lives.

My brothers and sisters, Jesus said that for us to do the work of God is to believe in Jesus. Jesus goes on to say, *"I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me will never hunger, and whoever believes in me will never thirst."* The great St. Augustine captured the meaning of Jesus' words in his famous statement, "My heart will never rest until it rests in you, O Lord." Everyone is looking for happiness; everyone is looking for fulfillment. Jesus' words in today's Gospel tell us that true happiness, true fulfillment, can be found only in Him.