

**Homily for XVII (17) Sunday year B. 25-07-2021 by Fr. Lubem Robert Waya, osj.**

**First Reading: 2 Kings 4:42-44**

**Psalm: Psalm: 145**

**Second Reading: Ephesians 4:1-6**

**Gospel: John 6:1-15**

### **FOR YOU WHAT DOES THE EUCHARIST MEAN?**

The miracle of the multiplication of loaves performed by Christ in the gospel reading of today is prefigured in the Old Testament by Moses' feeding of the Israelites with manna from heaven, and today in 2 Kings by the prophet Elisha. At the behest of the prophet, the twenty barley loaves of bread brought to him by the man from Baal-shalisha became sufficient for over a hundred men and there was some left over. These acts demonstrate God's generosity and benevolence towards us as consequences of our obedience to the commands of His Word. When we appreciate the Lord's providence and obey Him, He multiplies the little we have by supplying us even more than enough to meet our needs and to share with others. We do this in the most profound way in the Eucharist which means thanksgiving. This same generous gesture as shown by Christ today in the feeding of the five thousand men with just five loaves, points to the fact that the Eucharist is such a meal that meets our needs and even more, since it is God's gift of Himself to us. How thankful we must be for this great gift! John's account of this emphasises three key elements to provide a deeper appreciation of the Eucharist. The more reason why we should value and worthily receive the Eucharist every day of our lives. These elements are the time of the multiplication, references to *Psalm 23*, and the gathering of the fragments that are left over.

First, Jesus performed the miracle of multiplication during the time of Passover, which was a commemoration of Israel's delivery from the slavery of Egypt to the freedom of the promised land. Today, it would no longer be a meal with the Passover lamb, but the Lamb of God who takes away our sins, whom we consume in the Eucharist. So, in the Eucharist we receive the real Body and Blood of the Lord. And as it was in times past, it would be a meal of deliverance from slavery, but this time from slavery to the devil, which is slavery to sin and evil. It would be a meal that would provide freedom and liberation for God's children who worthily partake of it. It would be a meal that would celebrate the New Life of the Lord, the Life of Easter since it is Jesus the Bread of Life who gives us life in abundance.

Secondly, it is in fulfilment of psalm 23 that Jesus seeing the needs of the people today, takes pity on them and will have them recline on the green. He feeds them and restores their strength. This is an image of the banquet of the Lord – the Eucharist in which we are all called to partake. Those who eat this food will continue to eat it in the House of the Lord to have life forever. When we receive communion, we share in this meal of the Kingdom of God. By it we are united to the Church triumphant, the Church suffering and the Church militant throughout the world and of all time who also have shared and still share in this meal. This is the Banquet of the Lord we share every time we receive communion aimed at making us become what we eat. The more reason why we should never miss the opportunity of going to communion. Ask yourself, when last did you receive Christ in the Eucharist?

Thirdly, Christ reinforces the culture of preservation in this account of the multiplication with the gathering of the left-over fragments of the loaves. Back in the days of the exodus from Egypt, the food that the people had brought with them ran out. They called upon Moses to give them food. He prayed to God, and God provided in the form of manna. This they would gather, but they were told not to take more than they needed since the left over was not to be stored. In completion of this teaching, Jesus instructs His disciples to do the opposite today. He says they should gather up the remnant which to their dismay is enough to fill up twelve baskets. This runs counter-cultural to the prevalent culture of waste today. And it does not stop at that because of the number twelve which stands for the 12 sons of Israel of the Old Testament and the 12 apostles of Christ in the New Testament symbolising continuity. Hence, by gathering the remnant in twelve baskets, the Lord teaches us the culture of preservation to responsibly care for His creation as a whole and not just the food He provides. Wasting food of course is an offence and a sin against humanity and charity. Most importantly too, the Eucharist which is not consumed during the Christian banquet is not to be thrown out or wasted since it is not a symbol but the true and real Body and Blood of Christ together with His Soul and Divinity. And since it is the meal of the entire Christian Community, the Eucharist must be preserved with reverence and dignity for the entire assembly so that the members of the community who are not present at the Eucharistic assembly

may also partake of it. This is the scriptural basis for the preservation of the Eucharist in our tabernacles for those who are absent from the Lord's feast or sick, and for all of us to reverence. Participating in the Eucharist must make us truly Eucharistic persons, broken and shared for all. If not, our partaking of it is in vain. Ask yourself today, what is your attitude towards the Eucharist?

May the Lord increase our reverence for the Eucharist and make us true and worthy partakers in His banquet so that as true Eucharistic persons we will receive life and not condemnation in the end. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen