

Timothy J. Grassi

18th Sunday in Ordinary Time (A) 2020

There was a young man, his name is not given, 13 years old at the time, who read about Dr. Albert Schweitzer's missionary work in Africa. He wanted to help. He had enough money to buy one bottle of aspirin. He wrote to the Air Force and asked if they could fly over Dr. Schweitzer's hospital and drop the bottle down to him. A radio station broadcast the story about this young fellow's concern for helping others. Others responded as well. Eventually, the young man was flown by the government to Schweitzer's hospital along with 4 1/2 tons of medical supplies worth \$400,000 freely given by thousands of people. This, of course, would be the equivalent of millions of dollars today. When Dr. Schweitzer heard the story, he said, "I never thought one child could do so much." This story reminds me of the Gospel we just heard where a young man who didn't have much, but what he did have, he offered to Christ and thousands of hungry people were fed. The pity of Jesus is the cause of abundance for those in need. As a matter of fact, whenever Jesus sees a person in need it becomes an opportunity to show His generosity. In the process, the so-called deserted place that Jesus had escaped to, became a place of satisfaction. And it is interesting that Jesus went to this deserted place after He heard of the death of John the Baptist. Perhaps He was looking for some alone time or more specifically some silent time with His Father. Of course, the

disciples and the crowd catch up with Him pretty quickly and as is always the case, Jesus put aside any of His own personal needs when He saw the crowd and He began to cure the sick. Notice that He cured them without being asked and as it began to grow late the disciples were concerned about being in this deserted place without food for such a crowd. Again, Jesus responds to the need by having the crowd sit down upon the grass and He feeds them with 5 loaves and 2 fish. It harkens to what St. Paul said in our second reading, that trial, distress, hunger, and danger do not separate us from the love of Christ. Rather, they draw Him close to us with a love that conquers all. Jesus takes care of His own, even in material necessities, but He counts on our cooperation, even though our contribution is almost insignificant. If we help Him, even with a trifle, as the Apostles and as St. John's Gospel tells us, the little boy who provided the loaves and fish did, He is ready to work miracles; to multiply the bread, to reform wills, to give light to the darkest minds. All this He will do and more, if we will help Him with what we have. All this suggests that one person can make a difference; or rather, 2 people can make a difference: one person and Jesus! Look at what one 13 year old boy did by supplying a single bottle of aspirin to Dr. Albert Schweitzer. This is not all that the miracle of the loaves and fish does. Jesus is also using this miracle to point to the Eucharist. Notice the language Jesus uses in the miracle are the same words He used at the Last Supper. In both cases He took, He lifted His eyes to

Heaven, He blessed, He broke and He gave the loaves at the miraculous feeding and the bread at the Last Supper. Because of this, the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves and fish is preparation for an even greater miracle, the changing of bread into His Body, which is to be offered as spiritual food for all mankind. The miracle of the loaves and fish showed men the power and love of Jesus, the same power and love that Jesus uses to feed the multitude of all the faithful through all time in the Holy Eucharist. As St. Thomas Aquinas says, "Whether one receives or a thousand do, each receives the same as the other, Jesus cannot be exhausted." Enormous multitudes will come to join in the Eucharistic feast, where they will be fed in a miraculous way with an incredibly superior food. If the multitude that received the loaves and the fish were excited and enthusiastic and ready to proclaim the good news of the miracle of the multiplication of simple bread and fish, shouldn't we be doing much more for the greatest miracle of the Eucharist where we receive the very Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of JC at each Mass? And unlike the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves and the fish, in the miracle of the Eucharist we become Who we receive. If we become Who we receive, then we will recognize that a single person is important, a single person counts and if we share what we have with Jesus, He can make it bear fruit beyond our wildest dreams. So, let's go out and give what we have to Jesus so that He can make dreams come true!