

Homily for the 18th Sunday in Ordinary Time, by Fr. Robin Joseph CRM

Readings: Isaiah 55:1–3; Romans 8:35, 37–39; Matthew 14:13–21

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Have you ever noticed that there are two kinds of hunger?

There is the hunger of the body, which asks for bread, water, and nourishment. But there is another hunger, much deeper—the hunger of the heart. It is the longing to be loved, to be understood, to be forgiven, to have hope, and to know that our lives have meaning.

Many people today have full refrigerators but empty hearts. They are surrounded by technology, yet they feel lonely. They have many acquaintances, but few true friends. They possess many things, yet they have little peace.

The prophet Isaiah speaks directly to this hunger when he cries out:

"Come, all you who are thirsty; come to the waters. Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price."

What a beautiful invitation! God does not say, "Come only if you are perfect." He simply says, "Come."

Come with your worries.

Come with your failures.

Come with your broken heart.

Come with your doubts.

Come with your sins.

Our God never tires of welcoming His children.

In today's Gospel, Jesus has just received the heartbreaking news of the death of John the Baptist. He withdraws to be alone. Yet when He sees the crowds waiting for Him, He forgets His own sorrow and is moved with compassion.

That is the heart of Jesus.

He always notices those whom others overlook.

He sees the tears that no one else sees.

He hears the silent prayers that no one else hears.

Perhaps some of us came to Mass today carrying burdens that nobody knows about.

A mother worried about her children.

A father anxious about providing for his family.

Someone grieving the loss of a loved one.

Someone living with illness or loneliness.

Someone struggling with disappointment or uncertainty.

Jesus looks upon each one of us today with the same compassion He showed to that hungry crowd.

Notice something beautiful in the Gospel. The disciples see only the problem.

"There are too many people."

"We have only five loaves and two fish."

"It isn't enough."

Jesus sees something different.

He sees a miracle waiting to happen.

How often we also say,

"My strength isn't enough."

"My faith is too weak."

"My family is too broken."

"My resources are too limited."

Jesus gently replies,

"Bring them to me."

Bring Me your little faith.

Bring Me your wounded heart.

Bring Me your fears.

Bring Me your family.

Bring Me your life.

In God's hands, our little becomes more than enough.

There is a touching story about a little boy after Sunday Mass. He asked his mother, "Mum, if Jesus fed five thousand people with five loaves and two fish, why are there still hungry people today?"

His mother smiled and answered, "Because sometimes we keep our loaves in our own hands instead of placing them in the hands of Jesus."

How true that is.

The miracle began when someone was willing to offer what little he had.

The Lord is not asking us to do extraordinary things. He asks us to place our ordinary lives into His hands.

A smile given to someone who feels forgotten.

A visit to an elderly neighbour.

A phone call to someone who is lonely.

A word of forgiveness after years of silence.

A meal shared with someone in need.

These simple acts become miracles when they are done with love.

In the second reading, St. Paul gives us one of the most comforting promises in all of Scripture:

"Nothing can separate us from the love of Christ."

Not sickness.

Not failure.

Not old age.

Not disappointment.

Not persecution.

Not even death itself.

Sometimes we think that when life becomes difficult, God has abandoned us.

The Cross tells us exactly the opposite.

God never abandons His children.

He walks beside us, even when we cannot feel His presence.

There is a beautiful saying attributed to St. Augustine:

"God loves each one of us as if there were only one of us to love."

Think about that for a moment.

Among billions of people in the world, Jesus knows your name.

He knows your story.

He knows your struggles.

And He loves you personally.

My dear brothers and sisters, every Eucharist is a continuation of today's Gospel.

Once again Jesus takes bread.

Once again He blesses it.

Once again He breaks it.

And once again He gives it to His people.

Only this time, He does not give ordinary bread.

He gives Himself.

The greatest miracle is not that five thousand people were fed in the wilderness.

The greatest miracle is that today, on this altar, Christ continues to feed millions of His children with His own Body and Blood.

As we come forward to receive Holy Communion today, let us bring to Jesus our five loaves and two fish—our joys and sorrows, our hopes and fears, our strengths and weaknesses.

He will bless them.

He will multiply them.

And He will satisfy the deepest hunger of our hearts.

For the One who fed the multitude still walks among us today, and His love can never, ever be exhausted.

Amen.