

Homily St Pius & St Anthony Corpus Christi Sunday Year C1

'It is good with Jesus, but with Him, even better is yet to come' . Today's gospel is a great demonstration of this! What I mean is that Luke 9:11 describes Jesus doing some pretty spectacular preaching (*He had over 5, 000 people come out to a deserted place to hear him*), as He taught the crowds about the kingdom of God, (*recall that that people on the street knew how unique a teacher He was, that according to Matt 7:29, crowds were 'astonished, for Jesus taught them as one having authority, and not as their scribes'*). And on top of such captivating teaching, Jesus had also been healing the sick throughout the day. All of this adds up to a special enough day with Jesus, so is it time now to 'call it a day and go home'? No, the best is lining up to come.

It might have happened that after such a wonderful day of teaching, healing and strong community spirit with Jesus, the crowd may have wished to just linger and continue visiting, and not disperse (*is this what makes the apostles anxious to 'dismiss' or 'disperse' the crowds?-Do they feel empty, like they have no way of following up such a day of miracles and marvelous preaching by Jesus?*) It sounds like the crowd may not have wanted to leave. What I am suggesting, is that the crowd may feel like us after we take a restful retreat, break or vacation. For example, ask yourself this question, "After a wonderful day out, or weekend away, are we as eager about getting back home as we were about taking off that morning to get to our 'deserted spot of R & R'"? To think about this differently, I remember that know when I was a kid and our family had been out on a trip/vacation maybe to spend a couple days fishing or camping, it always seemed like the ***drive/ride home was so much longer*** than the drive to the river or campground. I imagine that our excitement and anticipation of getting away always made the driving TO the vacation spot seem short and closer, than what feels like the much longer and wearying drive back home on the other side. Was it because of the left-behind jobs at home that were still waiting to confront us again at the door? Or maybe it was the necessary unloading of everything we dragged along on the trip that we knew needed taking care of, the minute that we got back home. On our camping trips, that meant physically unloading the car or truck, but also putting all the gear back into place. We had to jump immediately into washing the piled up laundry (*of course, everything we took was now dirty-not to mention anything left unwashed left at home in the rush to leave*). A major 'back at home' job in our earliest days of camping (when we slept in tents), meant pitching the old canvas tents up again (we used

two tents, a parents' tent and a kids' tent!) in the back yard to let them dry and air out adequately (from any rains on the trip that wet the old canvas or even just the dew from the morning we broke camp!) It was never as fun pitching them this second time to air them out, before rolling them up and storing them in the garage. Oh, and we probably had catching up to do with house or yard chores left behind too. So this all meant an inevitable let-down in returning home, making the ride back seem so tiring and long. This experience makes me think that as this day out with Jesus draws to a close, the people may have looked especially tired and weary. And the good news is that, Jesus is just getting started! The 'best' with Him is yet to come! Jesus is going to feed over 5,000, by pulling food from his meager sack of five loaves and two fish, stretching it out to feed everyone to their full buffet-satisfaction levels! Talk about a miracle on so many levels! First, just getting that many people served without a riot breaking out (a tired 'hangry' crowd) is a wonder enough. I remember back in the summer of 2018 in Owensboro a huge water main broke down on 4th street which also washed so much of the road out too, but it cut off water completely for several days to a lot of the city. A story made the newspaper, about the National Guard bringing in a huge water purifier that could clean water pumped right out of the Ohio River to drinking standard level, and crowds grew so quickly lined up to fill containers, that they got restless and rough with each other, causing the police to have to respond!) But with this crowd of tired, hungry folks, Jesus can feed them all and fully satisfy them, and motivate His apostles to be the lead waiters (even despite their hesitance or fear). Yet, most marvelously, Jesus does it all from a simple starter base of only five loaves & two fish. And not done yet, Jesus sends home with the 12 apostles, a filled 'take home pack' (doggy bag)! I understand that action as Jesus' way of saying to them after He had first challenged them, (*'You give them some food yourselves'- Lk 9:13*), "Now you have your own starter pack for future feedings of the people you minister to." So, absolutely, with Jesus the best is yet to come. We do see it in this 9th chapter of Luke, because do you know what event follows just a few verses later? In Luke 9:28-36, Jesus will be transfigured on the mountainside revealing His glorious divinity to Peter, James & John.

So what do we take away from this scene of so many miracles from Jesu? First and most simply that Jesus always feed us (all that we need)! Yet even more, Jesus calls us to join in His grace, by feeding others in His Name (a lot of

people think that is the scariest part of this miracle-the fact that Jesus put it on the apostles to do something themselves to satisfy the hungry crowd!-How would we have responded?) Yet, this miracle tells me also that Jesus can use our simple and small contributions to meet tremendous challenges feeding 5,000 (*however unlikely we think that our little part can help or not*). But Jesus can use our gifts (if we offer them) to satisfy the needs of others. On the feast of Corpus Christi today, we highlight this similar action taken up every time we celebrate the Holy Eucharist. Here, God uses simple, common bread and wine to take on His identity just as He instituted Mass at the Last Supper, telling His apostles, “This is my Body” about a piece of prayed over common, broken bread (Luke 22:19) and “This is my Blood” about a simple cup of shared wine (Luke 22:20). In John chapter 6, He brought this message home even clearer when He said, “My flesh is real food, and my blood real drink” (John 6:55). Even more miracles, Jesus transforms them, making His body & blood be enough, just what we need, to satisfy our souls’ hunger. Jesus does this every mass, making ordinary things extraordinary, making small offerings spectacular, and stretching meek gifts into magnificent ones. Jesus does this for us.

When we trust and turn our offering over to Him, He will supply what we need. And through us, Jesus can meet the needs of others too (the ‘Give them some food yourselves’ part). Before we shrink back and say ‘But we can’t-how could I ever do anything to meet such a big job? I like to point out how Jesus always teaches us gradually to trust in Him. Looking back over this feeding miracle, notice that immediately after Jesus challenged them to take care of the crowd, he invites them to bring (however small) what they had. Trust and offer what you have. Then to keep walking small starter steps with them, Jesus asks them to act in faith, and have the people sit down in smaller, more manageable groups of 50 (*like tackling big problems by breaking them down into smaller sub-jobs to complete in stages*). Then Jesus has them keep stepping out in trust gradually by them starting to hand out bread from His store in waves (or courses), and group by group or trip after trip back to Jesus’ store, they end up having the whole crowd fed to satisfaction. And as a final detail, maybe the apostles delayed eating themselves while they served the multitudes, so Jesus packs them up an abundant ‘to-go’ serving for them to be fed too. Jesus feeds us and teaches us, to feed others by trusting and using what He gives us to meet the hunger of others in His Name. May we who are fed, share this gift of Him with others!