

Homily. 17th Sunday in Ordinary Time. Year.B. 24/25 July 2021.

There really is enough of everything to go around. Enough of food and drink, of accomodation and services, of care and community, of respect and of love. The matter is that our systems, the very systems we've created and which we support, don't share what is available and are often wasteful when they do share. This hoarding selfishness, this flagrant wastefulness, is seen in our personal lives, too, because as I've said already the systems we access are a reflection of ourselves. They are run, maintained and developed by people just like us.

The story of the feeding of the multitude is a story of generous, abundant sharing let loose by Jesus. It's also a story about gathering up the scraps so that nothing from this sharing is allowed to go to waste. The small boy's lunch, so thoughtfully packed by his Mum for the lads big day out is offered by him when he hears Jesus asking the disciples to do something about feeding the gathered crowd. Andrew and the other disciples were ready to dismiss as inadequate what the boy offered, but Jesus wasn't. He took what was given, thanked God for it, broke it up and began handing it out. Suddenly, there was enough from 5 small barley dinner rolls and 2 dried smoked fish for everyone. Magically, miraculously, there was more than enough when this example of sharing was witnessed.

Given the abundance of food which "appeared" Jesus insisted on collecting all that was left over, 12 baskets full of surplus. This further emphasised the plentitude and warned that nothing should be wasted.

To throw away such blessings and such generosity would have been, as it still is, an insult to all who give and to the Giver of all blessings and of every good thing.

When we see our tax contributions wasted on courts and political game playing, our efforts to bring about justice and equity denigrated, our feedback dismissed, changing nothing, and our skills and abilities dismissed as of no use we rightly feel cheated and are justifiably angered. Whenever we witness our efforts to build community and friendship being diluted and broken up by powers above us, our generosity taken for granted and our giving being thrown away we rightly experience frustration and disillusionment. Yet, these scenarios are an all too often common phenomenon.

The story of the feeding of the multitude is against such perversions, running as it does counter to these behaviours. It calls our small gifts and kind sharing great, big enough in the hands of the Lord to satisfy many with bounty left over. It speaks to us all, saying that we are to honour such gifts and contributions, treasuring and saving all that is offered, for even the left-overs can fill the 12 baskets of the disciples of Christ, the 12 new tribes of God's family, the people of the New Covenant.

In the Psalm we sang; The hand of the Lord feeds us. He answers all our needs. Before that, in the Opening Prayer, we prayed for an abundance of God's mercy to come upon us so that, with God as our ruler and guide, we might use the good things that pass away in such a manner as to hold fast even now to those things that ever endure. These sentiments are exactly the learnings and messages residing at the heart of the feeding

miracle. For if we, like the small boy that day, give freely what we have into the Lord's hands ensuring that nothing offered gets wasted then, from the abundance of God's gifts and from our respect for them and for each one making their offering, our present way of life will be sanctified and made holy every day until we come to enjoy the feast of eternal gladness.