**Catholic Diocese of Bungoma, Kenya**18th Sunday Year A
Isaiah 55:1-3, Rom 8:35, 37-39 Matthew 14:13-21

Welcome dear friends in Christ to the 18th Sunday of the Liturgical Year A.

I’m Fr. Christopher Wanyonyi, Pastor of Christ the King Cathedral Parish, in the Catholic Diocese of Bungoma in Kenya, East Africa.

Kenya is found on the East Coast of Africa bordering the Indian Ocean on the East, Tanzania on the south, Lake Victoria on the South West, South Sudan on the North West Ethiopia on the North and Somalia on the North East. The Population of Kenya is approximately 53 Million people. 60% of them are below the age of 24. Bungoma Diocese is found in the Western part of Kenya, about 250 miles west of Nairobi the Capital City, running along Kenya Uganda border. As a diocese it has a population of 1,950,000 people. Out of this, about 850000people belong to the Catholic faith. We have 80 ordained Priests and 60 Major Seminarians. Christ the King Cathedral Parish is the Cathedral Parish of Bungoma Diocese. We are two Priests serving 30,000 faithful in our Parish which has 7 Sub- Parishes. The most important need of our people is education. To alleviate this challenge of lack of education, The Parish initiated Fr. Walstra Academy to offer quality education to young people. Our school programs run from 6 a.m. to 6.pm, from Monday to Saturday. Because of this, we are compelled to provide ten O’clock tea and Lunch to all members of the school. We had a mud house where we were preparing these meals but because of too much rain, there are so many cracks on the wall of this structure and of course its stability is not quite assured. The Ministry of Education has warned us to either construct a new one or completely stop cooking. We cannot stop cooking because the children and their teachers will not sustain long hours without food. We desperately need your support to help our young ones and their teachers. Like Jesus in today’s Gospel, let us be moved with compassion towards these needy children. That we could rise above our own challenges and see the greater need of this little ones will be a noble cause for God’s greater glory and our own sanctification. No doubt, your generous response to our financial appeal will help bring not only smiles but an assured safety and hygiene to these future hope of our nation and the world at large. Thanks so much and God bless!

As we celebrate today’s liturgy, we are invited to reflect on the generosity of God. A God who makes things happen when we least expect it. In the first reading, we hear of God’s free gift of mercy to us. Our God invites us his faithful to come, eat and drink from his hands at his table of plenty irrespective of our individual status. No one is a stranger at God’s door. He provides for us in all seasons. On this day I’m truly praying that through your never ending, generosity, this same God will provide a new kitchen for Fr. Walstra School, so that these needy children can continue with their studies in a conducive environment. This I must say with deep humility that through you, I and consequently our children and their teachers back in Africa, and Christ the King Parish fraternity at large will ever remain indebted to you. St Paul in the second reading exhorts the Romans to recognize the depth of Jesus’s love for them. Nothing can separate us from the love and generosity of Christ our Lord. Nothing can be an obstacle to God’s provident love and generosity. God provides for us in abundance, as portrayed in today’s Gospel where Jesus feeds five thousand people.

In today’s Gospel Jesus is not immune to the pain of losing someone he loves. He did not play-act in human situations, he lived with them. As painful as most deaths were for Jesus, the death of John was the worst. John the Baptist was murdered. His death was because of the pride, lust, ignorance and vanity of his assailers! We have all gone through moments as these at some point in life. We know how emotional such moments can be. Think of how many lives this World’s COVID -19 pandemic has claimed in such a short while. As we continue praying for God’s healing, let’s remember that he’s a God of everlasting love and mercy. His generosity to us his children cannot be measured.

Each of us must by our way of life challenge those we serve to a love and a generosity far greater than what they deem themselves capable of (as seen in today’s Gospel). At the basis of this challenge is God’s irresistible invitation to a faithful relationship with him (says Prophet Isaiah) and the pledge that his love is ever with us in the person of Jesus Christ (today’s second reading).

With only five loaves and two fishes, Jesus asked his disciples and his hearers to trust him, to “sit down” on the grass as if they were not in any hurry. I look back on some moments when I too experienced God’s generosity in my life, and I ask to know how to “sit down” in trust in the moment of crisis. Jesus’ response to us today too is simple and to the point: “You give them food to eat.” Of course friends, God loves a cheerful giver.

Those who trusted got more than they needed. Beloved in Christ, do you believe that miracles happen when we place our lives in the hands of Jesus. We may think that we have or are nothing, yet, when we learn to trust him and truly believe that he leads and guides us, there’s no limit to what we can accomplish and do in his power.

When we place it all in the hands of Jesus, not only do we succeed but also we find ourselves with twelve baskets left over - a perfect number symbolizing abundance and also the number of the apostles. At times, our resources may seem very inadequate but time will show that wonders can be done with very little. Just look at what Mother Teresa achieved with nothing of her own.

There are two clear lessons. God takes care of his people. Once the disciples began to share the little food they had with those around, it triggered a similar movement among the crowd, many of whom had actually brought some food with them. When everyone shared, everyone had enough. A picture of the kind of society the Church should stand for.

The second lesson is that it was the disciples and not Jesus who distributed the bread and fish. And so it must be in our own time. If we do not share with others what we have received from God, the work of Jesus and the spreading of the Gospel will not happen.

Our children in Africa send you lots of love and deep gratitude for all your sacrifices for their good. Even now they trust that through you, their school kitchen that’s badly cracked will soon take a better shape so that they are safeguarded from any possible dangers.

Thank you so much and God bless you! Have a grace-filled Sunday and blessed week!

Rev. Fr. Christopher Paul Wanyonyi,
Parish Priest, Christ the King Cathedral, Catholic Diocese of Bungoma.