**Congregation of the Passion Holy Spirit Province**

Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Year A

SERMON IN A SENTENCE: Today’s Gospel speaks to us of the generosity and Compassion of Jesus

This is the only miracle recorded in all four Gospels (see Mark 6:35-44, Luke 9:12-17, and John 6:1-14), a fact that speaks loudly of its importance to the early church. The Feeding of the Four Thousand is recorded in Matthew 15:32-39 and Mark 8:1-10. All six accounts "appear to be a variant form of the same tradition"

Jesus has just been rejected by his own people Chapter 13 and has also been told of the murder of his Precursor and cousin, John the Baptist by Herod Antipas (Matt14:1-2), Matthew then tells us that ***As soon as Jesus heard the news, he went off by himself in a boat to a remote area to be alone*** but a crowd of some 5000 people - according to Matthew – is so eager to hear him speak and be cured by him that they followed him interested in what he had to say and be cured by him. But as is often the case with Jesus what they expected and what they witnessed was far and way beyond their wildest imagination. They found a very compassionate and generous Jesus. Not only was Jesus concerned for the crowd but so too were his disciples. ***Just as Jesus felt compassion for the crowds in v4, so the disciples feel compassion*** v5. They are surely hungry themselves, and can imagine the misery that awaits the crowd unless someone takes action. Their approach to Jesus is quite unusual. They do not address Jesus as Lord, but explain the obvious, "This is a deserted place, and the hour is now late" - and issue an order, "Send the crowds away." They assume that Jesus is so caught up in ministry that he fails to notice the fading sunlight. They feel a responsibility to bring him back to reality - to prompt him to act sensibly. The disciples are concerned for the crowds, but they are also concerned for Jesus. A crowd can quickly become a mob if not managed properly. Even if things don't go that far, the good will that Jesus has generated will dissipate if the crowd goes away hungry. The disciples are also concerned for themselves. In a crisis, Jesus will want them to do something - and they can't imagine what they can do.

When Jesus says, "you give them something to eat," Jesus made it clear the he was not about to feed the multitude without the human instrument. The bread did not come as manna from the sky, but through the work and kindness of some human hand. The obedience of the disciples was important to this miracle just as our obedience is important to the kingdom today. Just as with the five loaves and the two fish, Jesus takes our contribution, however modest, and makes it enough I fact in light of the Gospel today more than enough.

And that applies to all of us Because of our Baptism we are members of the Body of Christ, we are all disciples of Jesus and the call to discipleship is a call to be missionary. The call to be missionary calls us to be compassionate and generous and to serve others just as Jesus did. This is not an option but a reality for EVERYONE! It does not matter where are or who we are. We are all called to be missionaries and hence to be generous and compassionate to all those with whom we live and work. St Theresa of the Child Jesus never felt her Convent yet she is one of the patron Saints of all Missionaries.

Like her, it is obvious that not all of us can go to the Missions in the USA or overseas, but we can support those who do go. There are a number of ways we can do that but there are three ways in particular.

The FIRST way is NOT MONEY!! While Money is so important for the work of local and overseas missions it is not the most important. The most important is one each of us- no matter how young or how old; how rich or poor how well or unwell we may feel - can do and that is PRAYER. That’s right PRAYER is the most important way we can support the missions and we can all pray!! Mission work is dangerous no matter where the missioner works. In the course of the year 2018, 40 Missionaries were killed throughout the world, almost double the 23 of the previous year, and they were priests for the most part: 35. After eight consecutive years in which the highest number of Missionaries killed was recorded in America, in 2018 it is Africa to take the first place in this tragic category.According to the data collected by Fides Agency, in 2018, 40 Missionaries were killed: 35 priests, 1 seminarian, and 4 lay people. In Africa, 19 priests, 1 seminarian, and 1 lay woman were killed (21); in America, 12 priests and 3 lay people were killed (15); in Asia, 3 priests were killed (3); in Europe, 1 priest was killed (1) Vatican source

The SECOND way of course is MONEY and hence the Appeal today. No mission can survive without money, The work of the Passionists missionaries in Papua New Guinea in Senta Belong Helpin - the center for handicapped children requires US$7500 a year and that money comes for the generosity of very good people.

The THIRD way is by becoming a Lay Missioner. A Lay Missioner is someone who volunteers to go to the Missions either local in the USA or overseas for 1 or 2 years renewable if the Missioner and the Mission are agreeable.

Jesus continues today to say to you and to me, "You give them something to eat" and it continues to challenge us.. We live in a world full of hungry people and pray that Jesus might do something. He responds, "You give them something to eat." The church has often risen to the challenge, providing food, clothing, shelter, and medical care to people in the far corners of the world.

The disciples respond, "We have nothing here - nothing - nothing but five loaves and two fish." They emphasize not what they have, but what they haven't. They see not possibilities, but problems. Their assessment is right on the mark. The disciples have five loaves and two fish - seven items -enough for a family - but the crowd spreads to the horizon. Not only have they assessed the food supply rightly, but they also have a point in their assessment of Jesus. He obviously needs someone to confront him - to bring him to his senses - to make him face reality. "Send the crowds away so that they may go into the villages and buy food." Act now, before this situation turns ugly. End the day on a positive note, Jesus! End it now!

We are always tempted to believe, as the disciples did, that we have nothing to offer in the face of overwhelming need. Millions of people are hungry, and we have nothing to offer except a small box of canned goods. Millions of people are infected with the COVID 19 virus, and we have nothing to offer except a few dollars. Millions of people lose their homes and livelihood to war or natural disaster, and we have nothing to offer except prayers and a few blankets.

Jesus saw the crowd, had compassion on them, and healed those who were sick (v4). Not only that but after the disciples distribute the bread, and "all ate and were filled" (v20). The disciples took up what was left over of the broken pieces, and filled baskets of leftovers (v20). In the manna miracle, in Exodus people were not permitted to keep leftovers, but Jesus, greater than Moses, has the disciples gather twelve baskets of food after they have eaten their fill.

Thank you for whatever financial contribution you can make today It is so important for the continuation ot the work of the Missions But remember Prayer is the most important. Let us pray for all of us and for all who work in foreign missions