

Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time
July 29, 2018

The gospel that we have just heard is a dramatic depiction of the magnetic attractiveness of Jesus. Why would 5000 people go out to the middle of nowhere and stay all day, have nothing to eat, and still would not think of leaving? We hear these words in the Mass, “you never cease to gather a people to yourself so that from the rising of the sun to its setting a pure sacrifice may be offered to your name.”

Just like the 5000, we are gathered together to hear the voice of Jesus and to eat the Bread of Life. We are hungry, we are thirsty for the bread of life. Sitting there all day without anything to eat or drink has left us anxious. A 17th century artist paints the scene as chaotic confusion as people stumble over each other trying to get something to eat. We are indeed desperate for God.

We have about two or 300 people in this church. Witter field in Wisconsin Rapids holds about 2500. Double that and we begin to get an idea of the size of the crowd. If there were 5000 people in Riverside Park, it would be crowded, leaving very little space for each person to sit in the grass and stretch out.

There were no public address systems in those days. How could all of those people hear the voice of Jesus? The fact is that the Sea of Galilee is almost 700 feet below sea level. Sound carries very well.

I looked up the price of one big Mac. It is about four dollars. 5000 big Macs would cost \$20,000. As it says in the gospel, not even 200 days wages worth of food would not be enough for each of them to have a little.

When Jesus changed the water into wine at the wedding feast, the Bible says that he had six jars containing 20 to 30 gallons apiece. That translates into about 600 bottles of wine. At \$10 apiece, that would be \$6000.

In John chapter 21 it tells how the apostles made the miraculous catch of 153 sizable fish. A couple years ago a fisherman caught a 77 pound fish out of the Sea of Galilee.

For easy figuring let's say the 153 fish averaged 10 pounds apiece. 1530 pounds of fish. At \$10 a pound the catch would be worth \$15,300.

I think Jesus should've gone into business. He could have been a millionaire. He had no overhead and he didn't have to advertise. People came flocking to him. Here we are at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. It is the best deal in town.

If it were barley loaves that were given out, I doubt if anyone would want it. Barley is course and crude and doesn't make very good bread. We're not used to such unrefined food. If it were big Macs that we are given out, I suspect that a lot more people would come. Throw in 600 bottles of wine and it would be a bigger and more raucous crowd. I also suspect that most of us would be turned off because we are looking for a much better food.

I am the bread of life those who come to me shall not hunger and whoever believes in me shall not thirst. (John 6:35) The miracles of food are compelling. The fact is that here in central Wisconsin, especially as we start harvesting our crops and gardens, we are beneficiaries of the lavishness of God in a very down to earth way. How good it is that God feeds us. How extraordinarily good it is that He gives us the Bread of Life.