

## REFLECTION FOR 17<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY YEAR B

**2Kings 4:42-44 Eph. 4:1-6 John 6:1-15**

Today's readings are all about hunger and how we can satisfy the deeper hunger of our life.

Hunger is the most basic of all human needs. We hunger for bodily nourishment, we hunger for companionship, for mercy, forgiveness, truth, love, peace, and we hunger for God.

In the Gospel we see this overflowing love of God in Jesus' marvellous compassion and generosity.

To appreciate this, we need to consider the circumstances of the miracle. It's easy to reach out to others when it doesn't cause us much inconvenience. It is not so easy when a demand is made of us at an awkward moment. Here a real sacrifice is involved. We have to set aside our plans and forget about ourselves.

So it was with Jesus. The apostles returned from their missionary journey worn out. Jesus and His apostles wanted time to be alone and rest. That is why Jesus and the apostles crossed to the far side of the lake. But when Jesus stepped out of the boat, he found a crowd of people waiting for him. Jesus might have got angry and sent them away. Instead, Jesus had compassion on them.

Human suffering and the cry of the needy always touches Christ's heart and stirs his compassion, forgiveness, healing, love, grace, and blessing.

We too, if we fail to respond to the cry of the needy, make ourselves poor in compassion and poor in love.

Now, Jesus is surrounded by at least 5,000 hungry people.

When Jesus told the apostles to give food to the people, they said, all we have is a small boy with five loaves and two fish. On hearing this, Jesus might have said, 'That is no good, forget the whole thing. Send the people home'. But he said no such thing. Instead, he took the five loaves and two fish, blessed them, and with them everyone was fed! And there were 12 baskets left over!

As the people went back to their homes at the end of that day, they knew that they had fully been nourished in body and spirit and experienced the goodness and love of God.

This miracle teaches us great lessons. What does this miracle teach us?

- + It teaches us that God's generosity is always greater than our needs.
- + It teaches us that God's forgiveness is always greater than our sins.
- + It teaches us that God's faithfulness is always greater than our doubts.
- + It teaches us that God's strength is always greater than our weakness.
- + It teaches us that God's wisdom is always greater than our questions.

The young boy in day's Gospel reading decided not to hold onto his bread and fish but generously gave them out to be shared, and it became the basis of Jesus's miracle.

Sometimes a small deed takes on an importance far beyond its actual value.

If we have never trusted God with our time, our talent, our treasure...all our resources, then this is the time to start. Let us offer everything to God saying, "Here is what I am and what I have Lord, use me." And God will bless and amplify everything beyond our expectations.

When God's love touches our smallest gifts or our weakest attempts, something powerful occurs.

We are called by Christ to become the Eucharist we receive, giving thanks for what we have received by sharing those gifts — our talents, our riches, ourselves — so that He can use them and us to work miracles in creating joyful Faith communities.

There is a tendency today to go in for the big gesture, and to neglect the small gesture. We may be tempted to think that because our contribution is small, it will make no difference. So we excuse ourselves from doing anything. But everything helps. Enough crumbs make a loaf. Besides, our example may trigger a positive response in others.

It's easy to give something that we won't really miss. But when the gift is as desperately needed by the giver as by the receiver, that is true giving. That is a sacrifice.

More often it is about giving of ourselves, of our time, our gifts. Giving things can be easy but giving of oneself is never easy. Before giving Himself as food and drink in the Eucharist, Jesus gave of Himself to people in so many other ways.

Mother Teresa felt called to take care of the poor in India. The need was overwhelming. All she had to offer was her one, solitary life. How could she make a difference?

Well, look what God did with that one solitary life! Today, tens of thousands of Sisters serve the poor because they are following Mother Teresa's example.

Mother Teresa once said "it is not about how much you do, but how much love you put into what you do, that counts"

St Paul in our 2<sup>nd</sup> reading today implores us to lead a life worthy of our vocation, bear with one another charitably, in complete selflessness, gentleness and patience. For the poor and the needy, let us always:

**Do all the good you can  
By all the means you can  
In all the ways you can  
In all the places you can  
At all the times you can  
To all the people you can  
As long as ever you can  
Be a blessing to others**

Fr Patrick