

Theme: Jesus sends us to care for others

Text: Matthew 14:13-21

The grace, mercy, and peace of Christ Jesus rest upon each and every one of you this morning. Amen

Our text for today says that when Jesus heard the news about the death of John the Baptist, "**He withdrew in a boat to a desolate place by Himself.**" Yes, He went away from those who had murdered John, His colleague in divine mission, the man whom He had called "greater than a prophet," a man sent by God to call the world to repentance and to prepare for the coming of the kingdom.

Now he was dead, beheaded by Herod to satisfy the whim of a luscious dancing girl. Jesus had had it. He got in a boat and went away. And who can blame him? The text seems to emphasize the need of Jesus to be alone; the need to go away from the multitude due to the death of His cousin John.

There are times that we need to go away and be alone with ourselves and with God. We must take time for ourselves and we need to encourage others to do the same. However, Jesus' retreat was not more important than His love towards others. Sometimes, it is necessary to put aside our rest due to our love for the gospel and others.

Our text says that Jesus gave up His time of rest to help those who were in need. To dedicate our time to others is an act of love that sometimes goes unnoticed. But we are not talking here of giving to others what we do not need or are left over.

No! We are talking here about giving to others what is dear to us and give it to those who are in need. Jesus is not blindfolded by His own concerns. He does not look down, but instead He sees outside of Him, and He sees that there are a multitude of people who needs Him. So He goes where they are, and bring healing and the Word of God to them.

No doubt you need to spend time for you. But you need also to look around yourselves and see that there are people who need you. Do this, not because you need to earn anything or show others that you are a good person, or because you are accomplishing a law that by force and threats requires from you to do good works. No!

Rather, do it because your neighbours are giving you an opportunity to renounce to yourselves and bring the love of God to them. Remember that we love because God loved us first.

The text says that Jesus had compassion and stopped His rest to help the multitude. In this case He heals them, and then He feeds them. We do not have the power that our Blessed Christ has, but we can make a difference doing small things toward others.

For example; we can bring food to the needy (we can fill up our food bank that is low), or listening the concern of others, or smiling at them, or hugging them, or simply giving them a shake of hands. Most of the time we fail to do these simple things.

Remember, God does not require from us the impossible, but what is in our reach. Remember too, He created us, so He knows what we are capable of.

The parallel text as Mark 6:34 says that Jesus "had compassion on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd" This mean that they were lost, disoriented in this life, aimlessly at the mercy of danger and predators. This is why Jesus gave up His time of rest to help them. He considered more important to help these people than His own rest. He gets down to work and "began to teach them many things." This is also our task: to teach motivated by our compassion for the afflicted.

The night arrives even for Jesus. Time flies when you get involved helping others and caring for them. When you do this you forget your own problems. But helping others brings also disadvantages. It presents difficulties. It brings new challenges. The night arrives and with it comes dark and difficult situations.

And here comes the question.

How long and often we should help others? Because helping others absorb our time, and this is not good. When this happens, we might send people away because their presence complicates our life! This is a difficult and controversial point when helping others. The disciples gave up time and rest, but until here they are ok. But Jesus wants them to take a step further.

In many occasions our "good intentions" are a way to conceal a problem. We see many things in a pessimistic way. We put a mark to where we can go, and refuse to go further. The disciples said to Jesus, **"This is a desolate place, and the day is now over; send the crowds away to go into the villages and buy food for themselves."**

To shrug off other people so they deal with their own life is easy. This way of thinking is human. This is what the disciples said in our text to Jesus, but He challenges them. He wants to teach His disciples a lesson they will never forget. He tells them, **"They need not go away; you give them something to eat."**

There are times that we wonder what we can do to help others? And sometimes we take refuge in our own problems to forget them or avoid them. We dismiss their problems, and we end up doing what the disciples said in our text, **"send the crowds away!"**

We realize that others may bring us more problems, and we have had enough. We cannot help. The problem is too big. The challenge ahead of us is beyond us. But Jesus stops us, and says to us: **"give them something."**

We must never forget that what "is impossible for us is not impossible for God." God wants to use you to make possible what you see impossible. It is impossible that someone has faith for you, but God wants to use you as a messenger so that others may believe in Him.

We, very often, renounce to the challenges that life present us because we believe that everything depends on us, in our abilities, in how much or how little we have to offer. When we think in this way everything seems too heavy, and difficult. But due to our faith in Christ we give up many things, including the idea that everything depend on us. Faith in the Lord makes us to put our life to the service of God and consequently to others. God knows how to use us and to bring something good from the impossible.

Our text mentions that Jesus fed 5,000 people and probably more, including women and children, with "Five loaves and two fish". Bread and fish are not too much for the human perspective. But Jesus Christ was there and this changed everything.

Jesus' miraculous feeding of the five thousand not only satisfied the stomach of the people but it also points us to the future. It points us to a future when we will all sit down and be fed by Jesus. Not just fed but to sit down and feast at the wedding banquet. We will sit down as honoured guests, we will sit down at the wedding banquet when the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, takes up His bride the Church throughout all of history, and we will feast. We will feast unto life everlasting, in the eternal blessedness of the presence of God.

My dear friends in Christ; sometimes the challenges, the conflicts, the problems that this world presents us make us afraid and we give up easily before doing anything. Today Christ teaches us to trust in Him even what we have is not a lot. Today Jesus teaches us that even things that look insignificant, it is what we need to use in His kingdom. Never a word of encouragement or a smile to others is insignificant! Just do it in the name of our Lord.

Where ever we go there will be always people who need to hear the Good News. This Word says that God never abandon us or leave us stranded. Jesus Christ saw our miserable situation, He had compassion on us and He came to us to be involved in our life to the point to give His life on the cross for us.

Never forget that around you there will be always needy people. Because Christ loves us first, He is moving us to give ourselves for others, not in order to obtain a reward; anyway in Him we already have everything. There is already a place in heaven waiting for us.

Be compassionate as God had compassion on you. Do not be afraid, trust in Christ and in the power of His Word. Put your life at God's service. Put everything you have, even those things that look insignificant or little in the hands of the Lord. Also, pray to the Lord.

The Lord knows what to do. He knows how to multiply things by His power. He knows

how satisfy the hungry, and the needy. In the same way that He satisfies you with His Word and Sacraments. Dear friends; shift your focus now. We are been identifying ourselves with that multitude, with the sick and the hungry and the lonely. Now, identify yourselves with Jesus who went to that desolate place. You are Jesus in the world today.

The Bible says clearly that we are now the Body of Christ on earth. Whoever is baptized into Christ has put on Christ. We are the Man in the desolate place.

Like Him, sometimes, so often, we want to get away. We cannot stand those people any more. We've had it with those lawbreakers, the crooks, the cheats, the liars, the frauds who kill or ignore the John the Baptists of today who call us to righteousness.

We cannot longer stand all those sick people who steal and rob and hate and rape and murder. We've had it with all those hungry people making demands on us because they are hungry and poor while we are well fed and in a better economical situation.

We want to get away. Sometimes we even crawl into the boat of the church thinking that is the way to get away from it all and to be at peace. But it is not. The multitude is there in front of you, quiet in their desperation, sick in body and sick in soul, hungry for food and even more for the bread of life, for Jesus.

Dear friends; you are the Man in the desolate place. People of God, have compassion. Do not send them away, help them. Amen

"My friends in Christ; that the Holy Spirit preserves you in the faith that seizes the promises of Christ, so that you may walk in confidence in the grace that you have received." Amen