

## GOSPEL

LUKE 9:11-17

Jesus made the crowds welcome and talked to them about the kingdom of God; and he cured those who were in need of healing.

It was late afternoon when the Twelve came to him and said, 'Send the people away, and they can go to the villages and farms round about to find lodging and food; for we are in a lonely place here.' He replied, 'Give them something to eat yourselves.' But they said, 'We have no more than five loaves and two fish, unless we are to go ourselves and buy food for all these people.' For there were about five thousand men. But he said to his disciples, 'Get them to sit down in parties of about fifty.' They did so and made them all sit down. Then he took the five loaves and the two fish, raised his eyes to heaven, and said the blessing over them; then he broke them and handed them to his disciples to distribute among the crowd. They all ate as much as they wanted, and when the scraps remaining were collected they filled twelve baskets.

The Gospel of the Lord.

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. At the start of this reading we hear how Jesus made the crowds welcome. What should we as individuals and as a Church be doing to also 'make the crowds feel welcome'?
2. In this story, Jesus called on the disciples to be active, to do something practical, and then God adds his miraculous power to do something unbelievable. How might God be calling you to contribute to something that is seemingly impossible, so that the power of the Holy Spirit can come into play?
3. What is it in your life that you offer to Jesus and ask him to bless? Like the food offered this story, what can you offer that God can bless and increase?

## A REFLECTION BY POPE FRANCIS

The Gospel presents to us the account of the miracle of the Multiplication of the Loaves; I would like to reflect on one aspect of it that never fails to impress me and makes me think. We are on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, daylight is fading. Jesus is concerned for the people who have spent so many hours with him: there are thousands of them and they are hungry. What should he do? The disciples also pose the problem and tell Jesus: "send the crowd away" so that they can go and find provisions in the villages close by. But Jesus says: "You give them something to eat". The disciples are discomfited and answer him: "we have no more than five loaves and two fish", as if to say, barely enough for ourselves.

Jesus well knows what to do, but he wishes to involve his disciples, he wants to teach them. The disciples' attitude is the human one that seeks the most realistic solution which does not create too many problems: dismiss the crowd, they say, let each person organize himself as best he can, moreover you have already done so much for them: you have preached, you have healed the sick.... Send the crowd away!

Jesus' outlook is very different; it is dictated by his union with the Father and his compassion for the people, that mercifulness of Jesus for us all. Jesus senses our problems, he senses our weaknesses, he senses our needs. Looking at those five loaves, Jesus thinks: this is Providence! From this small amount, God can make it suffice for everyone. Jesus trusts in the heavenly Father without reserve; he knows that for him everything is possible. Thus he tells his disciples to have the people sit down in groups of 50 — this is not merely coincidental, for it means that they are no longer a crowd but become communities nourished by God's bread. Jesus then takes those loaves and fish, looks up to heaven, recites the blessing — the reference to the Eucharist is clear — and breaks them and gives them to the

disciples who distribute them... and the loaves and fish do not run out, they do not run out! This is the miracle: rather than a multiplication it is a sharing, inspired by faith and prayer. Everyone eats and some is left over: it is the sign of Jesus, the Bread of God for humanity.

The disciples witnessed the message but failed to understand it. Like the crowd they are swept up by enthusiasm for what has occurred. Once again they follow human logic rather than God's, which is that of service, love and faith. The Feast of Corpus Christi asks us to convert to faith in Providence, so that we may share the little we are and have, and never to withdraw into ourselves. Let us ask our Mother Mary to help us in this conversion, in order to follow truly and more closely the Jesus whom we adore in the Eucharist. So may it be.

## REFLECTION QUESTION

- What has struck you from this reflection by the Holy Father?

## PRAYER

*Spend some time in prayer with one another*

1. Conscious of what has just been shared, members briefly name/ describe their prayer needs.
2. Intentionally call on the Holy Spirit to be present (e.g. "Come Holy Spirit, please be present as we pray")
3. Move to prayers of thanks and praise to God
4. Pray for each others' prayer needs. Where appropriate, you may like to encourage the group to place a hand on the shoulder of the individual that you are currently praying for.
5. Conclude your prayer time with another prayer of praise, perhaps reciting the 'Glory Be' or similar prayer.