



## Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (Year B)



John 6: 1 -15

Jesus went to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, also called the Sea of Tiberias. A large crowd kept following him, because they saw the signs that he was doing for the sick. Jesus went up the mountain and sat down there with his disciples. Now the Passover, the festival of the Jews, was near.

When he looked up and saw a large crowd coming toward him, Jesus said to Philip, “Where are we to buy bread for these people to eat?” He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he was going to do. Philip answered him, “Six months’ wages would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little.”

One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, said to Jesus, “There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish. But what are they among so many people?” Jesus said, “Make the people sit down.” Now there was a great deal of grass in the place; so they sat down, about five thousand in all.

Then Jesus took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated; so also the fish, as much as they wanted. When they were satisfied, he told his disciples, “Gather up the fragments left over, so that nothing may be lost.” So they gathered them up, and from the fragments of the five barley loaves, left by those who had eaten, they filled twelve baskets.

When the people saw the sign that he had done, they began to say, “This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world.” When Jesus realized that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, he withdrew again to the mountain by himself.

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Reflection:

Did you know that there are over a billion Catholics in the world? That’s a lot of people! “How do you even begin to look after that many people and their needs?” Andrew points to a little boy, who has five barley loaves and two fish, “But what are they among so many people?” Jesus tells his disciples to make the people sit down. It is clear that he will do the rest. The same is true when we go to church, we simply follow Jesus’ instructions on what to do. He does all the rest. It’s amazing how he manages to provide for so many people with what seems to be so little.



Table Discussion (at mealtime):

- What are some ways that your parish tries to help others?
- How can your family be involved in helping out?



**The Starfish Story** (a bedtime story):

I was walking on a beach one day; the tide had just gone out.  
And strewn along the beach that day were countless starfish stranded in the sun.  
Out in the distance I saw a boy, he wasn't more than ten.  
He threw those starfish one by one, and cast them into the sea.

"Now look you hear," I said to him. "Your job is never done.  
There are a million starfish here, not counting other shores.  
What difference do you think you'll make, what hope to save them all?"

For a moment he stopped and looked at me, and picking an other one up.  
he said, "I might not be able to save them all, and some may well dry up.  
But for the ones that I do throw, and the ones that I pick up,  
I make a difference, that's for sure; that's why I don't give up."

So next time you face a dauntless task, and it all seems a bit too much,  
Remember then that little boy, and the words he said that day.  
"It's best to do a little bit than nothing much at all;  
It's better to help as much we can than fail to care at all."

**Bringing the Problem to Jesus** (a family activity):

As children grow up and hear things at school, on television and in conversations they overhear, they become aware of issues that trouble them. These issues may have to do with the environment, poverty, injustice, conflict or inequality, to name but a few. The fact that they are troubled is a good sign; it shows they care. Take the time to listen to their concerns and help channel a response. It doesn't have to be earth-shattering or all encompassing. It may be as simple as doing one small thing. In some cases, it may snowball into getting more people involved (i.e. the whole family, the neighbourhood, the school, etc.). No matter the action taken, take the time to celebrate what you have done.

In dealing with an issue make sure to incorporate prayer. Spend some time praying and thinking about the problem. Give them the time to listen to God, and to get in touch with their desire to do something, before coming up with ideas that you can work on together. It is also good to leave some things to God, asking him to fill in the large void. After all, our actions are much like those five barley loaves and two fish before so large a crowd.



**Considering What Jesus Did** (a reflection exercise):

Who could have predicted that an innocent man's death on a cross would go viral? Men and women have died by violence and torture since the beginning of time. Some have been remembered, others not. Not only did Jesus' life and death have a great impact on the people of his day, it has had an impact in every age and among all nations, and, in many ways has changed the world. Take some time to reflect on the cross, then write a journal entry on the effect of Jesus' love on you. You may want to write it in the form of a love letter.

(You may also want to listen to U-2's song: "Pride: (In the Name of Love)", though written to celebrate Martin Luther King Jr., it can also be heard in the context of the man who inspired Martin Luther King Jr.: Jesus). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LHcP4MWABGY>