

Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B
2Kgs 4:42-44
Ps 145 *passim*
Eph 4:1-6
Jn 6:1-15

Deacon Bob Cassey
St. Petronille Parish, Glen Ellyn
July 29, 2018

Here's what God promises: it will be enough. I'm hoping that you will come away from this homily with the message, "Bless it, and it will be enough."

The other day I spotted a sign in a shop window on Main Street. A whiteboard displayed the message, "Not to spoil the ending, but everything is going to be ok." I wondered, *Is this an example of optimism or of hope?* The virtue of hope was the focus of our parish mission a few years ago. The preacher drew a distinction between optimism and hope. There's a lot of overlap between optimism and hope, but here's the big difference: The optimist says, "Everything is going to turn out ok." With hope, though, you know that however it turns out, it's going to be ok. However it turns out is going to be ok.

The Gospel passage I just proclaimed is taken from the Good News of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John. It is St. John's account of the multiplication of the loaves and fishes. It's a familiar story. Thousands of people have to be fed. A boy is found with five loaves of bread and two fish, and that's all they've got. Jesus says, "Okay!" The people get settled on the grass. And that's when Jesus took the loaves, gave thanks, and passed them out. He gave thanks to God of course, but what did he give thanks for? Maybe he gave thanks for the generosity of the little boy, and for the cleverness of Andrew in finding the little boy, but mostly, I imagine, he gave thanks for God's loving-kindness; he thanked God for providing for all their needs. For all their needs were satisfied; they ate bread and fish until "they had had their fill." And the leftovers filled twelve baskets!

The love of God overflows. God takes care of his children abundantly. We hear talk nowadays about the so-called "Prosperity Gospel." On television we see handsome preachers with expensive haircuts wearing designer suits preaching prosperity before they rush off in their limousines to board their private jets. And they feel no shame and make no apologies for their lavish lifestyles because under their Gospel health, wealth, and vitality are signs of God's blessing, of how much God loves and blesses his faithful ones.

The Catholic Church does not subscribe to the Prosperity Gospel. That is not the tradition of the Church, the tradition that takes seriously the words of Jesus that blessed are the poor, blessed are those who grieve, the tradition that holds St. Francis of Assisi up as a model, the tradition that heeds the message of St. Paul we heard a few weeks ago, "God's grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness."

The Church offers instead the Abundance Gospel: God loves us and God takes care of us out of the abundance of his love. As we see in today's Gospel story, God satisfies our every need – not our every want, because our desires are insatiable – but God gives us out of the abundance of his love all we need.

Jesus taught us to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread." Give us today what we need to get through the day. Five barley loaves and two fish don't look like much, but if we see them as what they are, gifts flowing from the love of God, they will be enough.

Remember the manna in the desert. In the Book of Exodus we are told that Moses led the children of Israel out of the land of bondage toward the land flowing with milk and honey that God had promised them. But first they had to pass through the desert. Like a sort of training camp, their time in the desert got stretched to 40 years. During that time wild quail were their source of protein. And God provided a sort of flour substitute called manna. The manna appeared on the ground and on the low-lying vegetation in the early morning like dewfall. The people were directed to collect a certain measure of manna for every member of each one's household each day. If they tried to store up more than they needed, the excess got infested with maggots and rotted. With one exception: on the day before the Sabbath, they were supposed to gather a double measure, with the one extra measure serving to cover the Sabbath day itself. That extra measure did not rot, and manna did not fall from the heavens on the Sabbath.

God in his gracious abundance fed them each day. He fed them with just enough for each one to eat their fill – but nothing more. And that was enough to sustain the people through 40 years in the desert. It was enough. Did people grow tired of manna? You betcha! "Manna, manna, manna! Gosh, I could really go for a cheeseburger right now." They looked back with longing at the meats they used to get in the land of bondage, the so-called "fleshpots of Egypt." But manna was enough to serve their needs.

At every Mass we pray, as our Savior commanded, "Give us this day our daily bread." In our hearts we desire more, much more, but God asks us to be satisfied – gratefully satisfied – with whatever gets us through the day.

On the day before he died, Jesus took bread and wine. He blessed them and gave them to his disciples gathered in the upper room. And what he gave them was enough, abundantly enough. And down through the ages to the present time, Jesus continues to give us himself in abundance. All we have to do is receive.

If we bless it, it will be enough. Because God's grace is sufficient for us, for power is perfected in weakness. However it turns out will be ok. Bless it, and it will be enough.