17 B 2024

There are times when life seems unfair. When a loved one is hurt; when we need to accept and live with a serious disease; when we are betrayed by someone we trust. Without thinking, it is easy for us to say, “Why is this happening; to me? What did I do to deserve this?” Those situations raise all kinds of doubt, and questions our ability to continue: do I have enough strength; am I able to think clearly of a resolution; would I have enough hope to see myself through it all.

In today’s Gospel, Jesus tells us that when God is present, when God acts, there is always enough. God brings light and life in our darkest moments. 5000 people were feed with five barley loaves and two fish. Let’s keep God before our eyes, and count on Him to be present in our time of need. To believe that and see that, we need to let the ebb and flow of life play out, trusting that God is directing and guiding us.

The miracle of “The Multiplication of the Loaves and Fish” was very important lesson for the early church. The Gospels record six versions of this miracle. The evangelists kept telling it over and over again. And they told it in a peculiar way: Jesus places His finger in the ear of a deaf man, and he hears; Jesus tells Peter to step out of the boat, and Peter walks on water; Jesus places spittle and mud on a man’s eyes, and sight is restored; Jesus calls Lazarus out of the tomb, and Lazarus lives.

But in the Miracle of the Loaves and Fish we are never told how the bread and fish were multiplied. We are not told how this takes place. What we have in this miracle-story is the beginning and the end: 5000 hungry people with only five loaves and two fish in the beginning; all are satisfied in the end, with left-overs.

A miracle-story, a beginning and an ending, but with no middle. But wait a minute. The very point of the story is in the way it is told. This miracle-story was so important to the early church because it provided, wait for it, wait for it: a clear definition of faith.

Faith is believing that God knows our trouble, the situations in which we find ourselves, and our hunger that God feeds us, even if we do not know how God will do it. God finds us, because God is present and active. Andrew and Philip represent us in the miracle. They, too, can’t imagine such an outcome. Faith is not about imagining how God will work. Faith is believing that God knows “the trouble we’re in,” our struggles, our hunger, and He will satisfy it, even we cannot picture how such a solution might occur.

The story of the multiplication of the loaves and fish has no middle. The story never tells how the miracle takes place, because faith is not knowing how God will be present and active, but believing that God is. He knows us, sees us, cares for us, and loves us.

