

Homily: 17th Sunday in Ordinary Time, July 26, 2015

Feast Day of Saint Joachim and Saint Anne

“The Lord Feeds Us”

Do you remember when you were growing up and coming home from school, totally famished, due to your very busy school day? Did your Mom make you a peanut butter sandwich or gave you an apple to relieve your hunger, until it was time for your evening dinner? Just like your Mom fed you with food from earth, the Gospel today talks about Jesus feeding the Five Thousand, his followers on earth.

The first reading from the 2nd Book of Kings, talks about Baal-shalishah bringing to Elisha, one of the early prophets, twenty barley loaves. Elisha commanded that these barley loaves be given to the people to eat. Elisha's servant objected saying there was not enough to feed those gathered. Elisha insisted on serving these twenty barley loaves. This small number of barley loaves was enough to feed over one hundred people; with enough left over after all had eaten, just as the Lord had said. This Old Testament reading foreshadowed Christ's feeding of the Five thousand that was proclaimed in today's Gospel reading.

Even when Jesus was feeding the five thousand gathered on the grass with earthly food, He was also feeding them with heavenly food. This meal was an early foretaste of the Last Supper, on Holy Thursday, when Jesus broke the bread, blessed it and gave thanks, and then raised the chalice, blessed it and gave thanks. He then fed his disciples gathered with Him in the Upper Room with this heavenly feast; the same feast we celebrate today in the Liturgy of the Eucharist. All four of the Gospels include a discourse on the multiplication of the loaves and fishes. It was such an extraordinary event in Jesus life that all of the Gospel writers felt it was a necessary entry into their own version of Christ's life story.

Both of these readings point out the bountifulness of God. God will always provide for the needs of all of His people. He provides to us in excess of what we need, if we only believe. Also, both of these readings point to the Liturgy of the Eucharist which we celebrate during each and every mass. The highlight of the mass celebration today and every day is the Eucharist.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church states that the Eucharist is the source and summit of our Catholic faith. All of the other 6 sacraments of our faith point towards, or flow from,

this Eucharistic meal. By our reception of the Eucharist, we are allowing Christ to enter into our bodies to physically nourish us, as well as spiritually nourish us. We become “one with Christ” and Christ becomes “one with us”. We individually enter into communion with Our Lord. And as we all spoke when we recite the Creed later in today’s mass, we also enter into “the Communion of Saints”.

Catholic Christians have celebrated the Eucharistic meal since the beginning of the Church. Because the Liturgy of the Eucharist is a memorial to Christ’s Passover Meal, the Eucharist is also a sacrifice. Christ sacrificed Himself for our sins. The words that Father Jim proclaims in the Eucharistic Prayer that we hear during every mass, “This is my body which is given for you... This cup which is poured out for you is the New Covenant in my blood” remind us of Christ’s sacrifice of His own life on the cross, to save each and every one of us.

Our second reading today from the Letter of St. Paul to the Ephesians, also relates to the Eucharist. This letter references the body of the Church. When we receive and consume the Body and Blood of Christ in the Eucharistic meal; we are joining into the body of Christ, the Body of the Church universal. We are entering into communion with Christ, one in being with Christ. We reference this one body of Christ each time we recite the Creed at mass...”I believe in the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church.” When we extend the “sign of peace” to our fellow parishioners, we are displaying a sign of our own communion with the body of Christ, the Church. We are one in a worldwide Catholic faith. We are one with the Lord.

We are all called by this letter of St. Paul, to live in a manner worthy of the call we all have received. Each of us has been given a special gift to serve God. One of the many gifts God has given us is the gift of faith. We all need to listen to God’s plan for us to make the best use of our gifts; even though when He speaks, it may be a quiet as a whisper or gentle breeze in the trees, to see what God has in His plan for us. Each of us needs to use our gifts to build up our church and its mission on earth.

One of the many gifts and strengths of the Church is our parents and our grandparents. These couples have helped to mold us into the people who we are today. They were our first teachers of the faith and have supported all of us during our life’s journey and more importantly, our own individual faith journey. Since today is the Feast day of St. Joachim and St. Anne, the grandparents of our Lord Jesus Christ, I will close with a blessing for all

Grandparents, written by our own Deacon Gary and Kay Aitchison. Will all grandparents stand to be recognized and blessed?

Grandparent Blessing

God, our heavenly father (on this feast of St. Joachim and St. Anne) we ask your blessing on these grandparents gathered here today. We recognize their treasured gifts to their families and to the parish family. They are valuable links, between the past and the present, passing on the family stories and traditions.

May they be surrounded with the love, respect, and support of their families as they embrace their unique vocation. May they be strong models for their families and for our parish community. May they be anchors that provide stability and a firm foundation. May their witness to their faith guide and strengthen us.

Lord, bless and empower these grandparents. Help them share their distinct gifts with their families and all whom they encounter. Keep them in your love. Give them your joy and peace each day so that they may always follow your Son Jesus.

“May almighty God bless you; + The Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.” Amen.