

# Homily for the 17<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time

July 28-29, 2018

Readings: 2 Kings 4:42-44; Ephesians 4:1-6; John 6: 1-15

Preacher: Sr. Karen Dietz

The response to Psalm 145 has been running like a backdrop in my head this week: The hand of our God feeds us; God answers all our needs. I suspect that for most of us reading and praying with the readings for this Sunday, this is true—God does answer all our needs, whether we recognize it or not.

Both the reading from Kings and the Gospel of John tell miraculous stories of feeding scores of people with what from all appearances seems paltry. Each story is an example of trusting in God's bountiful love and the positive effects that love can have. Also, after all are fed, there are leftovers! These are both miracles of faith and trust. Elisha and Jesus are instruments of God, satisfying the physical hungers of the people.

In the reading of St. Paul to the Ephesians the readers/hearers are encouraged to live as people of faith. This is one of my favorite readings from the Epistles. In the chapter immediately preceding this, we are reminded of the height, width and depth of God's love for us; a love that certainly gives us all we need. I believe that it is only because we know this great love of God that we can truly follow the call we have each received. This is the rock on which we stand.

When I was growing up in a family of four girls I remember my parents urging us both in school and in our interactions with others to be the best individuals we could be. My dad was particularly strong in his encouragement. He was not going to let the fact that he had only daughters be a stumbling block to any future successes we might enjoy. Perhaps it was because he lived in a household of strong females (even the dog!), that he believed so passionately that each of us could do whatever we set our minds to as we carved out our futures. The reason my sisters and I could even imagine a future in a given profession or with a certain partner, children, etc. was my parents' unconditional love for us, the rock on which our family was built. That is the kind of love God has for us, and with that love we can do and be anything.

And so, what about all those in our world who do not know the boundless love and care of God? Who are they and how are we called to be instruments of nourishment and grace to them? What is our responsibility as baptized Christians?

In our world today there are so many who are displaced, hungry, ill and lonely. They are the ones gathered on the grass before us waiting to be fed. I am well fed and I rest confident in the abiding presence of God in my life. I may easily feel overwhelmed by the sheer number of people and needs in front of me. I may be tempted to turn off the news in the evening or close my door or ignore any appeals that come in the mail, hoping that somehow it will all get better and life will be different. Though tempting, turning off the world is not responding to the call to discipleship. It is not an option when we know so deeply and intimately the love and care of God. Being loved by God carries with it a responsibility to bring that love to the world.

What can any one of us do? We can pray for all those who do not know that God will feed them and answer all their needs. We pray that perhaps through one of us, this message may be made real. You can read and watch the news and stay up to date on all issues affecting the quality of life of all. Concretely, can you make a phone call or send an email to one or more government officials, asking them to remember that *all* life is sacred; that children and parents belong together; that all people have the right to be in a place where they will be safe regardless of race, creed or sexual preference? Have you given lately to a food pantry or soup kitchen? Can you give blood, be sure that you are a designated organ donor or register as a bone marrow donor? Do you have time to volunteer for an agency that helps others to live more fully? The options are many and are open to all.

As children of God (just as I am a daughter of my parents), we are called to something greater. We are called to look at the world with our eyes and hearts open. It is for us to respond in whatever paltry ways we can, lightening the burdens of others and allowing God to feed them through us. We know that there will always be enough, leftovers even!