



ST. PATRICK'S ANGLICAN CHURCH

4797Curtis Blvd. Port ST John FL 32927

The Seventh Sunday in Trinity
July 31, 2022

The passage selected for the Sermon today is taken from the Gospel:

“I have compassion on the multitude, for they have been with me three days, and if I send them away fasting to their own houses, they will faint by the way” St. Mark 8:2-4

In just a few moments, we will celebrate Arianna's First Communion. It is one of those moments of special grace that we have this particular Gospel designated for this blessed day. You will notice I said it is “our” blessed day. While it will be a beautiful and transformative day for Arianna, it is equally as important to us all.

There are two gifts that come to a parish through participation in the Eucharist. The first is the grace to live with the courage and power that comes from having the very life of Christ in us. It is by His strength and His love that we can embrace the good works God has prepared for us and withstand the temptations that beset us.

The other gift is being re-created as the whole Body of Christ. By that, I mean the mystical Body, in which all the members of the parish and God's Holy church are knit together, not only with Jesus, but with each other. Our well being is knit into one purpose so that every member of the Body is the beneficiary of the grace given to any one member. In the real and spiritual sense, it is through Communion that we become one in Christ and with

each other. That is why Arianna's important day is one that we all should celebrate and cherish.

So what is it that Jesus is trying to teach us about Communion through this Gospel that teaches us about how he miraculously fed the 4000. The first thing we learn is why he made Communion for us.

When Jesus looked out at the crowd that had been following Him, He knew that they would struggle to make it all the way home unless someone gave them food. He saw that they would faint along the way. He pitied them. That means that it made Him sad that they would suffer and He was determined to help them through the hard trip home. He did that by miraculously multiplying the bread and fish so that they would have all they would need, and even more than they would need, to get them through their journey.

Jesus looks down at our lives the same way. He sees that we are trying to listen to Him and follow Him, but that we still have a long and hard journey before we get home to Him in Heaven. He sees that without His help, we will faint and collapse and fail to complete the journey. He has pity on us. He is sad for our heartaches and our pain. He wants to heal us and give us everything we need, and even more, to complete our journey home.

Some people may believe that this discussion is too hard for young ears, and that the mystery of God's miraculous presence is beyond the intellect of young minds, like those of Arianna and her friends. Yet, Jesus tells us that we must come to him as little

children, with open minds and hearts and eyes that are not cynical, which can still see the miraculous.

There isn't a young person in this parish that hasn't experienced the difficulties of this life, including separation, hurt and loneliness that come from other people's pride and selfishness. They have experienced too often the hypocrisy and lies that they receive in the place of trust and truth. They already know that what passes for love in this world is at best broken.

And yet, they know in their hearts that they were created for a better world. They hope, against their experience, that their broken relationships and families can be better. They still love, even when that love seems unrequited and disrespected. They know who they are meant to be and how their lives should be lived. Sometimes it seems to us that they are not grateful enough for the sacrifices that those of us who care for them make. But the truth is that they lash out at us because they believe and hope that we are the ones who can make everything better.

It is also true, that, of ourselves, we can't make their lives better, anymore than we can control and fix our own relationships and lives. We can't stop the hurt of separation in their lives, when we still grieve those who are not still with us in our own lives. But, through Jesus Christ in the Eucharist, this healing, this hope, this love in the face of separation, victory against the evil and sadness in the world, is not only possible, but it is miraculously and uniquely our gift.

This is how the Mystical Presence of Jesus in our lives is manifested through participation in Holy Communion. First, we receive the gift of peace. There are great difficulties and sadness in our lives, but we were not only created to have a better life, we know that the fulfillment of that promise of healing and love will be fulfilled. We pray it will be tomorrow, but if not, then eventually and hopefully soon. But whether we see it in this life, or only ultimately in the next, we will see the God who loves us and through Him we will be with the people that we love the way we always hoped we would be, and that love will be eternal. The Eucharist gives us grace to know that with all our hearts regardless of

how things look to the world. That knowledge gives us peace.

Second, The Eucharist opens our inner vision and heart to the miraculous. We call this hope. Regardless of our situation, we know it can be changed by God if we believe and pray. We can see that in the lives of the people who surround us, and we can feel it in our own lives. Miracles do happen, forgiveness heals broken families, love changes our own lives and the lives of those around us, whether the rest of the world believes it or not. We have no doubt that this is the truth.

Third, we know that we will never be abandoned and alone. We know that the love of Christ, the person who is Jesus, is not only with us but He is within us. We can never be separated from Him by anyone but ourselves. He will forgive us when we fall, He will give us grace in hard times, He will be our comfort and our joy today and forever. Not only will Jesus be with us, but with all those who we love with Godly hearts, our families and friends and our parish, share in our lives, and love us for being one with them in Jesus.

Finally, we receive love that is transcendent and transformative. It is love of God for us that changes bread and wine to the mystical Body and Blood of Jesus. It is the love of God that comes into us by the sacrament that changes our sad and lonely lives into the lives of saints. It is the Love of God that gives the power to forgive, to reconcile, to re-make this world into the world we were created to inhabit. That love changes the world slowly now, but will ultimately and inevitably change it completely into the world to come, in which we will live forever.

Arianna will receive the Bread of Heaven for the first time in just a few minutes. We will receive it with her, and we will welcome her into the fulness of the Body of Christ, which is our peace and hope and source of grace and love in our lives. We should all receive this Holy Communion in our own hearts by faith with thanksgiving.

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

