

Rev. Toan Do
Isaiah 55:1-3
Romans 8:35, 37-39
Matthew 14:13-21

18TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME
Epiphany Catholic Church
Louisville, KY, USA
August 2, 2026

An empty plate, plastic, reusable. It's already two Christmases since I arrived here at Epiphany and in Anchorage here, and the same family, one of our parishioners of course, each Christmas, they would give the priests a rum cake, chocolate rum cake. It's empty. We finished it a long time ago. The reason I bring this up is I would like to ask that we all use our imagination as if this is a chocolate rum cake and slice it into however many slices, let's say 24 pieces. We here, this crowd of us here, maybe 150 people. In order for this chocolate rum cake to feed or to give each of us here from a piece of 24 slices, the first thing that came to mind would be through human estimation, not possible.

When I was in Australia, one of my colleagues who arrived the same year, same time, with me, he and his family had just come from Sweden. They spent two years doing postdoctoral study in Sweden, and they were hired to work at the Australian Catholic University. One of the evenings in which the faculty gave a reception, of course, there were different finger foods, and dessert and so on. And when it came to a very nice cake, this colleague of mine said, you know, the crowd was about 40 of us or so. And of course, there was more than just one cake. There were other things, but the cake was so good to the point that after we all tried to get a piece of it, there was one slice left. Oh. And there were four of us coming to that spot. <laugh> And he said, in Sweden, they have a tradition that whenever the food or a plate is shared, the last piece will continue to be divided in half. So just imagine that last slice of cake cut in half, one person takes it. The second person cuts that in half. And then the second person takes one piece. The third person has now one quarter and cuts that in half. Then that person takes that piece and to the point, just use your imagination, that sharing, not getting our parts, not getting our portion, but it is sharing. If we can approach that tradition or that beautiful custom from Sweden, right, then the gospel reading today makes some good sense to us.

In the first reading from Isaiah, the prophet's now telling all of the people at the end of their journey back to Israel, God is always the one who provides what they need. Are they willing to share? Are they willing to participate in this one bread,

one sharing, one gift of God? Or do they come to the table and think, "I'm going to take my portion and walk away." The perception is what the three scripture readings invite us to think of today. One more thing. Earlier before mass, I tried to hide this. I borrowed the food of this package, macaroni and cheese, right, we all are familiar, from our food cart, from there. I tried to hide it here, but one of our parishioners came and said, "Was there a reason for hiding this package here?" And I said, "Yes." I'm glad that I had not forgotten. But as I looked at this, this side of the package, if it's cooked well and ready, it will be able to serve three persons or three servings per container. Just imagine. We have 150 people here. I imagine, I didn't count it, I didn't open it. But if there were 150 kernels of macaroni and cheese, and if we all come, not to take our portion, but to share in this bowl of macaroni and cheese, just think - the perception of the mind will make us think, "I'm not going to take my part. I'm going to participate in this sharing," then the miracle of Jesus in today's gospel speaks volumes of the gift that God can do for us.

Of course, Jesus, knowing of the vast crowds, 5,000 men not counting women and children, and we know that by tradition, Jewish traditional ways, there's one man, then we must multiply by three of them, one wife and four of the children. So, 5,000 men multiply by three or four that would be 15 to 20,000 people. Just imagine. And there were five loaves of bread and two fish. How is it possible for Jesus to feed the crowd of great number? In the upper minds of the disciples, it was not possible. There would be no way that five loaves of bread and two fish could feed this great crowd. But in their mind, they were lacking one thing as Paul reminds the Roman Christian. If God was with them, there's nothing impossible for them. In the context here, Jesus, as he took the five loaves of bread and two fish, the first thing he did was to give thanks, said the blessing, gave thanks to God, said the blessing. Then, the miracle of multiplication of bread and fish becomes effective and visible right in front of their eyes.

As we see, we all, many of us here are cooks, chefs of all sorts. I'm kind of a little bit of this. Lately, I have not been cooking much. Since I came here, I asked one of my sisters to assist me with food. And, of course, every weekend, every Sunday, I would go home and take some containers of food. And I noticed that some days, some weekends, the food that was cooked for me to eat throughout the week, there's often more than enough. And, you can imagine, there are three priests in the house here. One from Mexico, one from Nigeria, and one was born in Vietnam-American in whatever way he is. We often have our own tastes, our own flavors. I can share the food with Father Claudio, but Emmanuel, he cooks very differently. He eats very simply, and most of the time, I don't have a share of his food. Neither

would he take a share my Vietnamese style and so on. So, often the food that I have, even though it's in the refrigerator at the end of the week, every now and then, I would have to throw some of it away, knowing very painfully that this food can be served and can be shared with others. But because of the condition and the situation that we are in, it was not and cannot be shared for health reasons. We can know in our modern day, not only the knowledge of food, but sanitation, and so on. But just think of how much each of us often wastes the food that we prepare for ourselves. And that much little food when thrown away, when shared and given to the right people, it can feed so many people. That is why the package here, the macaroni and cheese that I borrowed from our food cart, given to us, donated to us, to be shared with those who are less fortunate than we are, makes so much sense, makes it so much more meaningful. Remember, food and nourishment mean much more when we are hungry than when we are full.

So, the crowds here, the little food that's shown in front of them by Jesus, that was brought to Jesus to multiply, but when they are hungry, the crowds were hungry; and in hunger, they will appreciate. We, too, we appreciate the food and the nourishment given to us much more than when we are full. Satisfaction is a perception in our minds that when God is with us, not the food, not the amount of food that satisfies us, but the gifts from God that satisfies our hungry souls, our hungry minds.

And today, Paul reminds the Roman Christians very well - nothing in this world can separate them from the love of God through Jesus Christ. And whenever we come together, whenever we are about to consume a meal or eat a meal, if God is there with us, we know that the satisfaction is not the fulfillment of the stomach, but the satisfaction is in the heart and in the mind. Let us uphold this concept of satisfaction given to us or provided to us, taught to us by Jesus in the gospel, by Isaiah in the first reading, and by Paul to the Roman Christians.