
 Compassion leads to the Eucharist



Now when Jesus heard this, he withdrew from there in a boat to a desolate place by himself. But when the crowds heard it, they followed him on foot from the towns. When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them and healed their sick.

Now when it was evening, the disciples came to him and said, "This is a desolate place, and the day is now over; send the crowds away to go into the villages and buy food for themselves." But Jesus said, "They need not go away; you give them something to eat." They said to him, "We have only

five loaves here and two fish." And he said, "Bring them here to me." Then he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass, and taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven and said a blessing. Then he broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. And they all ate and were satisfied. And they took up twelve baskets full of the broken pieces left over. And those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children (Matt 14:13-21)

It was around noontime. She was walking under the scorching sun through the streets of the city. The only thing she used to sell - her body - was giving out. The blood was dripping on the pavement, marking the way behind her. The gate of a church was closed. She rang the bell. Nothing happened. She rang it again. A servant came out. "I want to see a priest". "Father is eating lunch", was the response. "I can wait". The servant went back and came again. "Father tells you to come in the afternoon. He needs to rest. He is tired". "I just want to confess". The servant went back and did not come again.

Compassion of Jesus

The Gospel tells us that when Jesus heard about the tragic end of John the Baptist he crossed to the other side of the lake. His departure, however, was noticed and people followed him. "When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them and healed their sick" (Matt 14:14).

Compassion is such a beautiful word and it makes this world beautiful. Its original meaning is "to suffer with". It describes a tender heart that feels the pains, troubles, and difficulties of others. A person with such heart tries to put oneself in the shoes of others: 'how would I feel if I were in such situation?'

However, compassion is not just about feeling, it is also about acting. Because he had compassion on the people, therefore, Jesus healed their sick. He did not get irritated, neither he told them to come back later. He offered them his time and power.

Compassion is indeed a beautiful word, but it is also a challenging word. Compassion calls us to get involved. One needs to "give up" one's own plans and schedules. One needs to "sacrifice" selfishness. Many people turned away from faith, because we were too busy doing our things. Our plans, our projects, our needs, were more important than the needs of people around us.

After healing their sick, Jesus also shows concern for the food. Sharing resources is also the fruit of compassion. The disciples had five loaves of bread and two fish. It was enough for them and Jesus. Sharing, however, was not an option. Therefore, they say: "Send the people away; let them buy food for themselves"(Matt 14:15). Yet, having enough for themselves and not for everyone was not an option for Jesus. Therefore, he says: "You give them something to eat" (Matt 14:16). They separate. It is all about "us" and "them". Jesus embraces. There is only "us".

It is remarkable to notice that when the tempter told Jesus to change stones into bread, Jesus refused (Matt 4:3-4). Jesus is not willing to make a "questionable miracle" to satisfy his own needs, but he is willing to use the little his disciples had to satisfy the needs of others. "Five breads and two fish" in our hands can only satisfy our needs. "Five breads and two fish" handed over to Jesus can fulfill the needs of multitudes. Share what you have, Jesus tells us, because our resources shared with the needy save life.

Sacrament

What follows is the "Eucharist". Jesus "took the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven and said a blessing. Then he broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds" (Matt 14:19). Notice the four words: take, blessing, break, and give. At the Last Supper,

Jesus did similar thing: "Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body." (Matt 26:26). Luke adds one more sentence: "Do this in memory of me" (Luke 22:19). The "Lord's Supper" of the first Christians was not just about the soul, but also about the body. The words, "do this in memory of me", were not meant to repeat only what Jesus said, but also what Jesus did. The Eucharist was about "faith working through love" (Gal 5:6). Believing in the real presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament led to the sharing of resources - food, time, natural talents and spiritual gifts - with brothers and sisters. Faith works through love-charity and love-charity means sharing. To a sister, who was helping a widow with five children by providing them with rice, the mother of the five said: "Each day Jesus comes to us in the grain of rice".

The world is plagued by selfishness. One has too much, another does not have enough. The Church is built on compassion that leads to sharing. "They all ate and were satisfied" and there was still plenty left (Matt 14:20). We should never forget this difference.

Conclusion

She reached the outskirts of city. The sun was setting down. A narrow road with trees on both sides was ahead of her and she saw a young man coming towards her. She had never seen such a handsome man before. He was dressed like a bridegroom, but he was alone. She started to think, who the bride could be. She must be a queen, a very beautiful woman.

At the same hour, the priest was celebrating the evening mass. As he was about to say the prayer of consecration he saw a woman dressed like a queen accompanied by a young man acting with kingly manners. He had an impression that he knew both of them.

The man was coming closer. He extended his hand towards her. "Come, my bride. The celebration cannot begin without you". At that moment, the priest began to cry.

Prayer Intentions

- Let us pray for the healing of Mrs. Huang and Mr. Shao;

- Let us pray for Mr. Zheng and his family; may the Lord bless them with grace, faith, and love;

- Let us pray for Mrs. Zhang; may the Lord give her wisdom and strength to solve the problems she is facing;

- Let us pray for the Wang family; may the Lord bless them with harmony and increase their faith;

Ten Commandments - the Path to Freedom

The Jews have always believed that daily recitation of the ten commandments leads to outer and inner freedom. One of our team members has begun to follow this practice and included the ten commandments into his prayers. He told us that since then he has noticed some changes. The most significant one is in the manner of craving things of the others. He always compared himself to others. He wanted to be like people around him and he wanted to have the things other people had. Now, he does not feel this urge anymore. Perhaps, some of you would like to follow this practice as well. We provide the text of the commandments below. It is taken from Deuteronomy 5:6-12.

- I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.
- You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not bow down to them or serve them; for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.
- You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.
- You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain.
- Observe the Sabbath day, to keep it holy, as the Lord your God commanded you. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter or your male servant or your female servant, or your ox or your don-

key or any of your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates, that your male servant and your female servant may rest as well as you. You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore the Lord your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day.

- Honor your father and your mother, as the Lord your God commanded you, that your days may be long, and that it may go well with you in the land that the Lord your God is giving you.
- You shall not murder.
- You shall not commit adultery.
- You shall not steal.
- You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.
- You shall not covet your neighbor's wife. And you shall not desire your neighbor's house, his field, or his male servant, or his female servant, his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor's.

May God bless all who remember us in prayer and support our ministry.

New Life Asia Team