



The Holy Spirit Province NEWSLETTER

20 July 2021



GIVING OUR ALL WITH TRUST: 17TH SUNDAY B

You've probably seen that ad on TV that says, 'from little things big things grow.' It's true. A little can go a long way. That is to say, a little in the right hands can go a long way. That's what we notice in today's story about Jesus. Five barley bread rolls and two small pickled fish, in the hands of Jesus, go to feed five thousand men, plus many more women and children.

The principle still holds that a little can go a long way. Let me tell you a story about this that comes from Florida in the United States. It's about a woman called Sue and a man called Tony.

One Saturday morning Sue was roaming through the crowd at a garage sale when she noticed a young black man looking at her intently. Catching her eye, he came up to her with an air of hesitancy and hope. 'Mrs. Lester?' he asked. 'Yes?' replied Sue, wondering how he knew her name.

'Mrs. Lester,' he went on. 'I was hoping so much that I would see you when I came back to Florida.' Then he poured out his story. Years before, Tony had been a student where Sue was a teacher (and still taught). The school was 'the end of the road' on the socio-economic scale. As the locals put it, if the kids didn't make it there, the next stop was a prison. Tony himself came from a poverty-stricken and dysfunctional home. The one bright spot in his life was the kindness and encouragement shown to him by his teacher Mrs. Lester.

He said to Sue: 'Day after day when everybody else was telling me I was stupid and bad, you would sit me down in your office and say: "Tony, you can do anything you want with your life if you set your mind to it." You even invited me and some of the other kids into your home. By the way, do you still have that blackboard with the coloured numbers in your garage...?'

Tony had returned to Florida after recently graduating from the University of Michigan and was soon to start work as the business manager of a reputable firm. The surprise reunion between teacher and former student continued in the middle of the garage sale, with Sue inviting Tony to come back to his old school to tell his story to the students there.

In our story about Jesus today, he is the number one hero, always concerned about the needs of others. He quickly notices that the people around him are desperate for something to eat, and right away he does something practical about it. But the second hero after Jesus himself is surely the small boy. After all, whose bread did Jesus multiply? Whose fish did he divide and share? None other than those of that small boy, who had only a little to offer, but who gave all he had. And in what the child gave, Jesus found the materials of a miracle.

Both stories tell the same truth. To make a difference to others, to bring meaning and hope and care into their lives, we need to bring them all the gifts we've got. We need to share who we are and what we have, with that unselfish love, gentleness, patience, and peace, named in our Second Reading. And we need to do that in the name of Jesus, who takes every good deed done to our fellow human beings as done to him in person.

Yes, dear People of God, a little in the right hands, given in the right spirit, can go a very long way indeed. It can even contribute to the making of that better world, which was the dream of Jesus. The dream he shared when he came into Galilee preaching and teaching about remaking this rough-tough world into the kingdom of God, God's kind of world!

So, whenever you and I are more concerned to get than to give, and whenever we are asked to give something, that we hesitate to give, let us think of the generosity of that small boy. And in our holy communion with Jesus today, let us ask him to help us 'to give our all', by sharing with others our daily bread, and anything and everything else that counts as personal resources. And always with faith and trust that Jesus our number one hero will receive and bless our efforts in ways that we cannot even begin to imagine!

bgleesoncp@gmail.com