

## **Breaking Open the Word of Faith**

Good News Reflections for the Sundays of July, 2018

by Terry A . Modica



## 13<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time

July 1, 2018

Read:

Wisdom 1:13-15; 2:23-24

Ps 30:2, 4-6, 11-13

2 Corinthians 8:7, 9, 13-15

Mark 5:21-43



### Reflect:

Wouldn't it be great if we could actually touch and feel the hem of Jesus' clothing, like the woman in this Sunday's Gospel reading? To be near enough to Jesus to be healed spiritually, physically, and emotionally. How can we, more than 2000 years after he ascended to heaven, get so close to him?

It is possible, and it's exactly what Jesus wants. It comes from developing a better understanding of who Jesus really is and how much God really cares about us. The synagogue leader understood, which is why he could say: "Please, come lay your hands on my daughter that she may live." He understood Jesus beyond what was in front of his eyes. He believed in the divine life of Jesus.

Knowing Jesus is to know divine life, which transforms our earthly life into something much more like his and then takes us to heaven. The first reading, remember, states clearly that death is not part of God's plan. Jesus drives this point home by allowing the girl to die before he reaches her house. Certainly God could have kept her alive until he got there! But he wanted to show the world that he could restore life and that he has the power to rescue us from death.

If we fear death, we don't recognize the nearness of Christ. We can touch the hem of his garment, but we don't see it, and so we don't believe it. In this case, we're like the mourners that Jesus had to chase out of the house before working his miracle.

If we fear that our trials are leading to disastrous conclusions, we've forgotten how powerful Jesus is, and we've forgotten that he cares enough to rescue us. We need to move ourselves closer to Jesus. We have

to press on through the crowd of distractions and doubts, with our eyes fixed only on Jesus and our hands reaching out to him in prayer.

If we fear that God doesn't care enough to help us, we need to spend more time learning why Jesus gave up his life for us and why the Father sent him to us.

### Questions for Personal Reflection:

† Do you believe that Jesus wants to work miraculously in your life?

† How has the disbelief of the people around you infected your thinking and reduced your faith?

### Questions for Faith Sharing:

† Describe a miracle that you saw or experienced.

† How long did it take?

† What blessings occurred during the time of suffering?

† How was all of this an expression of God's love?

## 15<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time

July 15, 2018

Read:

Amos 7:12-15

Ps 85:9-14

Ephesians 1:3-14

Mark 6:7-13



### Reflect:

In this Sunday's Gospel passage, Jesus teaches us about trust. If we're to fulfill our calling as God's missionaries of love in this world, if we're to fulfill our calling to share the Good News, we must trust God and the resources that he provides.

And we must trust that he will always provide exactly what we need when we need it, even though it doesn't always seem sufficient. It's important that we don't feed the inclination to distrust him by expecting anything other than what he provides.

Every Mass ends with a re-commissioning rite for the calling we all have. The final blessing is a sending forth after we've been renewed in our relationship with Jesus. His presence in the Word and in the Eucharist and in the Church community re-energizes us (when we pay attention) to boldly go and do all that he asks of us.

Through the priest, Jesus sends us into the world to be the visible proof that he is real and that he's alive and that he cares. With Jesus, and in him and through him, we are all evangelizers who can make a difference in the world.

Yes, all of us -- all of us who have participated in the Eucharistic celebration with conscious awareness of what we are saying and praying and receiving during Mass. Go forth in bold confidence! Jesus is sending you out from the church with his Spirit and his sufficiency.

However, when we do the packing and decide what to take with us on the mission, we like to take an abundance of stuff, just in case we might need it. Thus, we fail to show others that God is reliable and trustworthy.

To be effective evangelizers, we have to surrender over to God whatever baggage interferes with our mission.

Remember this: Surrender is not truly surrender unless we no longer want what we surrendered. If we still have some desire for it, we're attached to it by a bungee cord that yanks us back to it, yanking us away from our true purpose in life.

### Questions for Personal Reflection:

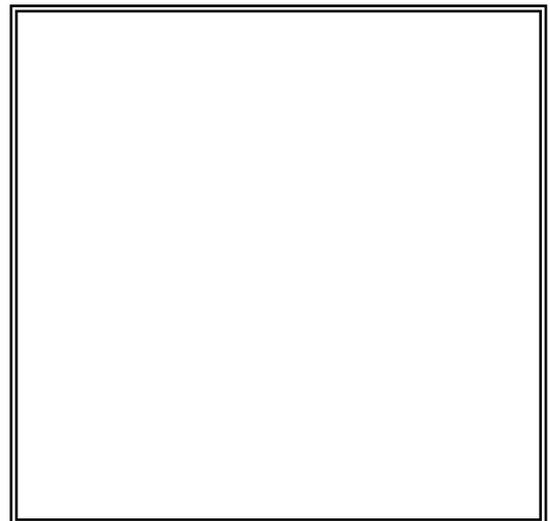
† In what areas of your life do you rely upon the Lord?

† What areas do you still need to entrust to him? What will you do this week to surrender any distrust?

### Questions for Faith Sharing:

† What kind of "food" do others serve you when you rely on God to provide for your needs through them? How does their service to you help them understand God?

† What kind of baggage should be left at home instead of carrying it into ministry? How does letting go of this better reveal Jesus to others?



## 17<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time

July 29, 2018

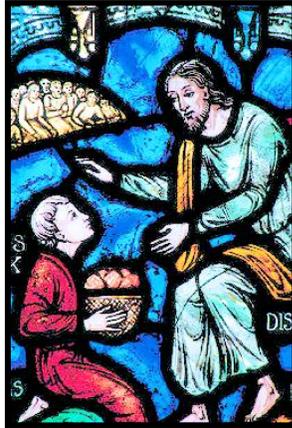
Read:

2 Kings 4:42-44

Ps 145:10-11, 15-18

Ephesians 4:1-6

John 6:1-15



### Reflect:

I've heard this Sunday's Gospel reading de-supernaturalized with explanations such as: "The real miracle is that Jesus got the people to share the food they had brought with them", and even this: "There wasn't enough food for everyone to have their fill, but what they had was offered to everyone, and the people were just so appreciative and willing to make sacrifices that they ate very little and thus there was food left over."

Yeah, r-i-i-ight. As if God can't multiply food miraculously.

The multiplication of the loaves and fish into a meal that not only satisfied everyone but was more than what they needed is an important foreshadowing of the Eucharistic banquet that we celebrate today. If we pay close attention to what's going on in Mass, and if we take it to heart, Jesus satisfies our hungers and gives us more than we need. What did you need from him before you arrived at church? He's trying to give it to you or lead you to it -- in abundance!

Receiving all that he wants to miraculously give us requires that we trust him to provide for us. We have to expect the unexpected. We have to wait on his perfect timing. But rest assured that he wants to give us more than we need.

Maybe some of the folks on that ancient hillside wanted steak instead of fish, but what they received was a Messiah who filled their hearts with more than enough faith to grow spiritually, more than enough hope to become stronger in their trials, and more than enough love to share as they went forth to reveal Christ to others.

In our Liturgies of the Eucharist, there's a lot more abundance to receive from Jesus than just a little wafer of his Body and a sip of his Blood. What do you really need from Jesus? More faith? More hope? More love? It's a good idea to think about this on the way to Mass so that you can participate in Mass more expectantly.

### Questions for Personal Reflection:

- † Why do you go to Mass?
- † Was there ever a time when you didn't go, and if so, why didn't you? What motivated you to start attending Mass again?
- † How satisfied are you now? What's missing? How might God provide for those needs?

### Questions for Faith Sharing:

- † What is available from Jesus during Mass other than his real presence in the Host and Precious Blood of the Eucharist?
- † How are the various elements of Mass gifts from God that can help satisfy our spiritual, emotional, and even physical needs?