Reading 1 2 Kings 4:42-44

A man came from Baal-shalishah bringing to Elisha, the man of God, twenty barley loaves made from the firstfruits, and fresh grain in the ear. Elisha said, “Give it to the people to eat.” But his servant objected, “How can I set this before a hundred people?” Elisha insisted, “Give it to the people to eat.” “For thus says the LORD, ‘They shall eat and there shall be some left over.’” And when they had eaten, there was some left over, as the LORD had said.

Reading 2 EPH 4:1-6

Brothers and sisters: I, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to live in a manner worthy of the call you have received, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another through love, striving to preserve the unity of the spirit through the bond of peace: one body and one Spirit, as you were also called to the one hope of your call; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

Gospel  John 6:1-15

Jesus went across the Sea of Galilee. A large crowd followed him, because they saw the signs he was performing on the sick. Jesus went up on the mountain, and there he sat down with his disciples. The Jewish feast of Passover was near. When Jesus raised his eyes and saw that a large crowd was coming to him, he said to Philip, “Where can we buy enough food for them to eat?” He said this to test him, because he himself knew what he was going to do. Philip answered him, “Two hundred days’ wages worth of food would not be enough for each of them to have a little.” One of his disciples, Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, said to him, “There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish; but what good are these for so many?” Jesus said, “Have the people recline.” Now there was a great deal of grass in that place. So the men reclined, about five thousand in number. Then Jesus took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed them to those who were reclining, and also as much of the fish as they wanted. When they had had their fill, he said to his disciples, “Gather the fragments left over, so that nothing will be wasted.” So they collected them, and filled twelve wicker baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves that had been more than they could eat. When the people saw the sign he had done, they said, “This is truly the Prophet, the one who is to come into the world.” Since Jesus knew that they were going to come and carry him off to make him king, he withdrew again to the mountain alone.

HOMILY

My wife, Barb, and I are still trying to recover after baby-sitting 4 grandchildren full-time for 7 days and then being with all 8 grandchildren for this past weekend. Now, anyone around small children … parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, even teens and babysitters … know that the young ones love to have someone read to them, and our little ones are no different. Well, no-one seems to make small-sized books with large-sized letters and large pictures anymore … you know, short stories … so I’ve developed this habit with the young ones, that when one of them brings over a half-inch thick volume with small letters and equally small pictures, and asks me to read to them, I pretend I’m opening the book and say, “Once upon a time, there was a king and a queen … and they lived happily ever after.” And that’s usually followed with, “No, Opa, I want to hear the WHOLE story!”

The whole story – not just the beginning and the end, but everything in between. Maybe we are like that also sometimes – are we content with just knowing there was a beginning to a story, and that the
ending was good? How do we make the choice as to when it is important to know the whole story, or just the beginning and the end? Football season is beginning soon – let’s look ahead – let’s say we find ourselves busy during a game day and then turn on the evening news to hear that the Bills won. After recovering from mild shock, are we content with just hearing the final score or do we want to know what happened at every play? If we are serious fans, I may have answered my own question. … I’m a CNN headline glancer, and maybe you are also – how do we decide what stories to read and not read? … More relevant to our message here, do we sometimes find ourselves treating our faith that way – yeah, once upon a time, we were baptized, then a few things happen along the way, and some day we’ll probably live happily ever after with God … someday … but, now, I can’t think about that, the WHOLE story, I’ve got too much else on my mind to think about, to be concerned about, to do.

The WHOLE story – that brings us to today’s message – it’s all about the Eucharist! So, to help get the importance of that message across, we’re going to try something a little different – audience participation, in a way. Maybe you’ve seen a pop music concert, rock, country, whatever, and the lead singer is belting out a popular phrase from a song and then points the microphone to the crowd and they chime in with the singer on the phrase. Today, I’m going to ask you occasionally to say back to me, “It’s all about the Eucharist!” Let’s try it once, ok? What’s our message today all about? “It’s all about the Eucharist!” Humor me, one more time: “It’s all about the Eucharist!”

It is all about the Eucharist. This liturgical year, we have been hearing from the Gospel of Mark, the Good News story of Jesus as related by Mark. Last Sunday, you may remember, we heard about Jesus and His disciples teaching among the people and then traveling by boat to a place where they could rest. But, the crowds found out where they were going and met Jesus and His disciples there – they were curious, they wanted to know who this man was, and especially, they wanted to see more miracles. If we continued in Mark, we would hear about Jesus feeding the crowd of 5000 men, and then continue on to other events in Jesus’ life. But, the Church saw this as a great opportunity to move over to John’s account of the feeding of the 5000, chapter 6 of his Gospel story of Jesus. John realized that this was much more than just another of Jesus’ miracles, much more than a sign of God’s presence among His people. So he also includes comments from Jesus about the bread He physically fed the people with, and then how He, Jesus, is really the Bread of Life for them, similar to the manna that God supplied to the Israelites in the desert during Moses’ time That is why John, Chapter 6 is often called the Bread of Life Discourse. We’ll be hearing more about that over the next several weeks before returning to Mark in late August. But now, we return to our message for today, that sets the necessary and important stage for the overall Bread of Life Discourse, and that message is, “It’s all about the Eucharist!”

It is all about the Eucharist. So, why do I say that, and why are YOU saying that? (Other than I asked you to?) What if I told you that I believe that the Holy Spirit guided me to talk about that today? You see, I was thinking about the homily message for several days this week, and what to focus on – even when I wasn’t directly thinking about it, it was in the back of my mind. Thursday afternoon, I left work and got in my car and said a prayer to the Holy Spirit, asking for guidance, as I often do, but maybe I said it with just a bit more urgency this time. I turned on Catholic Radio, and the host said something like, “Well, that concludes our discussion today on the Eucharist, which is what John, Chapter 6, is all about.” I looked up and said, “Thank you, God.” So, what is John, Chapter 6, all about? “It’s all about the Eucharist!”

More than that, actually, much more than that. The Eucharist is much more than the message for today, and much more than John, Chapter 6. Jesus calls Himself the Bread of life. If we go to the Catechism, it says that the Eucharist is “the source and summit of the Christian life.” ‘The other sacraments, and indeed all ecclesiastical ministries and works of the apostolate, are bound up with the
Eucharist and are oriented toward it. For in the blessed Eucharist is contained the whole spiritual good of the Church, namely Christ himself” … By the Eucharistic celebration we already unite ourselves with the heavenly liturgy and anticipate eternal life, when God will be all in all.” … Did you catch that? **Eternal life** – the happily ever after part of the story … “In brief, the Eucharist is the sum and summary of our faith: ‘Our way of thinking is attuned to the Eucharist, and the Eucharist in turn confirms our way of thinking.’” Let me repeat that last statement from the Catechism: “the Eucharist is the sum and summary of our faith: ‘Our way of thinking is attuned to the Eucharist, and the Eucharist in turn confirms our way of thinking.’”

The Catechism also lists other names that have been given to this sacrament, and why. I’ll give you a second or two after I say each name to give a brief thought about it: Eucharist, because it is an action of thanksgiving to God; the Lord’s Supper, the Breaking of Bread, the Eucharistic assembly, the memorial of the Lord’s Passion and Resurrection, the Holy Sacrifice, the holy sacrifice of the Mass, the “sacrifice of praise”, the spiritual sacrifice, the pure and holy sacrifice, the Holy and Divine Liturgy, the Sacred Mysteries, the Most Blessed Sacrament because it is the Sacrament of sacraments, the holy things, the bread of angels, the bread from heaven, the medicine of immortality, viaticum, and Holy Communion, which is probably the name most recognized. By the way, we call it Holy Communion, “because by this sacrament we unite ourselves to Christ, who makes us sharers in His Body and Blood to form a single body.” So, once more – “It’s all about the Eucharist!”

The Eucharist – prefigured in the Gospels when Jesus takes the bread, “says the blessing, breaks and distributes the loaves through His disciples to feed the multitude” of people. It’s the only miracle of Jesus before His crucifixion that is mentioned in all four Gospels. The Eucharist – we give thanks by being joy-filled yet reverent. Our joy can be expressed with an external or internal smile when we receive – try smiling when you come for Communion, especially if you aren’t used to doing that. Our reverence can be expressed before and during our reception of the sacrament as we ensure that we are spiritually prepared, and for a few minutes afterwards as we prayerfully thank God for this special gift of His Son, before we even begin to think of leaving the building.

One other comment – with our role as modern-day disciples and members of the Body of Christ, and especially with regard to today’s Gospel reading, Pope Francis has called on us to reject the “throwaway culture of waste” to be found throughout society. You see, once someone has developed this attitude of waste, it carries throughout every other aspect in life, and even life itself. … So, we need to do our part, and encourage others, to reduce the 40% of edible food that is thrown away in our country, so that all may share. We need to consider how we waste our time, our mind, our relationships, our personal energy, our environment, instead of using them to improve the world. We need to consider those videos that are surfacing about the horrendous activities casually discussed at Planned Parenthood, and whether we should finally act to do something about it – like write our legislators and demand a defunding of the organization now, and not wait for another video to surface about their true disrespect for life. We need to treat **all** human life with respect and dignity – **ALL** human life – the poor, the elderly, the infirm, the unborn, the marginalized. It’s part of what we believe, and remember that the Eucharist is the sum and summary of our faith. So, one more time – “It’s all about the Eucharist!”

Once upon a time … God sent His only-begotten son among us, to save us from our sins and to show us how to live to be joy-filled in this life and to share eternal life with God and live happily ever after.

There is a lot here to think about – it’ll be on the St. Louis website in a few days. But, in the meantime, if someone asks you what today’s homily was all about, you can simply say, “It’s all about the Eucharist!”