

Impact

Bring faith to life. Find life in faith.

IT MAY ONLY SEEM LIKE A LITTLE

Do you sometimes feel small, inadequate, insufficient? Are there times when you want to make a difference, and yet feel there is little you can do? The disciples in the gospel passage we hear on August 2 had only a little - a few loaves of bread and two fish. How could such a meager meal begin to feed the hunger of the thousands of people present? Where the disciples saw little, however, Jesus saw the abundance that is possible through the blessing and grace of God.

PUT WHAT YOU HAVE IN GOD'S HANDS

When we hear the word "sacrifice," most of us think of giving up something, like the things we forgo during Lent. That is certainly part of what it means to sacrifice. The sacrifice to which Christ calls us, however, is much more than a simple renunciation of a favorite food or activity.

To sacrifice means "to make holy." In the Gospel of Matthew, the disciples' sharing of the bread and fish was certainly a sacrifice -- they did not know what was going to happen with what they gave. Yet they put the loaves and fish in Jesus' hands, trusting that he would know what to do with their offering.

LET JESUS TAKE, BLESS, BREAK, AND GIVE YOU

In that deserted place, Jesus took the food, blessed it, broke it, and gave it to the people. At Mass, we bring bread, wine, and monetary donations to the altar. These symbolize our offering of our lives, gifts, and resources, which we ask God to consecrate -- to make holy, to use to bring about his good work in the world.



Our offering of bread and wine are taken, blessed, broken, poured out, and given. They become Christ's Body and Blood, our food for the journey of life. In receiving, we are called to allow Christ to transform us, so that as members of Christ's Body, we might meet the needs of a hungry and hurting world.

A LITTLE CAN BECOME A LOT

Jesus took what seemed to be a small, insignificant offering and made of it a feast. In those moments in which we feel small, ill-equipped to meet the challenges of life, it is good for us to remember that from the meager five loaves and two fish, thousands were fed.

As disciples, we are called to follow the way of the Lord who shows us that living sacrificially -- giving when we might think it difficult or impossible -- is a way of freedom and joy, a way that leads to holiness, to being more like Jesus who always shows us God's way of self-giving love. We are invited to give our very selves, our lives, time, attention, and resources and in doing so, witness to the overflowing, bountiful love of God which seeks to feed every hunger, bring solace to those in pain, and peace, healing, light, and grace to all who are in turmoil.

Jesus shows us that a little can become a lot when we put our gifts in God's hands. We can trust that God will make our lives, gifts, and resources more fruitful than we can imagine - God will do great things with whatever we offer him. What little do you bring to the Lord today? What will you sacrifice so that others will know Christ's love through your stewardship?

"Left alone to face the difficult challenges of life today, you feel conscious of your inadequacy and afraid of what the future may hold for you. But what I say to you is this: place your lives in the hands of Jesus. He will accept you, and bless you, and he will make such use of your lives as will be beyond your greatest expectations! In other words: surrender yourselves, like so many loaves and fishes, into the all-powerful, sustaining hands of God and you will find yourselves transformed with "newness of life", with fullness of life. "Unload your burden on the Lord, and he will support you". -- St. Pope John Paul II

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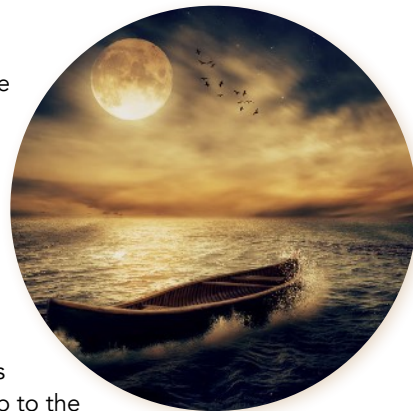
Get out of the boat.

"At once Jesus spoke to them, "Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid." Peter said to him in reply, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water." He said, "Come." Peter got out of the boat and began to walk on the water toward Jesus. But when he saw how strong the wind was he became frightened; and, beginning to sink, he cried out, "Lord, save me!" Immediately, Jesus stretched out his hand and caught Peter, and said to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?"

I have to admit, I feel for Peter in this passage from the gospel of Matthew. The disciples had been miles offshore. A storm had risen, and their boat was being tossed about. Keep in mind, many of these men were fishermen. They knew the sea and its ways and would not have easily been made afraid. This must have been a mighty storm! Jesus approached them, walking on the sea, and the disciples are terrified. They wonder if this is a ghost. Which is where the passage above begins. Peter wants assurance that this truly is Jesus. He is literally ready to put his life on the line in order to know for certain that this is Jesus, and in this act of faith and trust, he is also coming to grips with the reality of who Jesus is, the Messiah, the Anointed One of God.

I don't know if you have moments when you need to get out of your boat, but I know I do. The boat is familiar, comfortable, tried and true, tested. The boat offers the assurance of safety, at least until the waters become fierce. But that's the thing. Sometimes, our tried and true, safe routines and devices don't stand up to the challenges of life. Being absorbed in work suddenly pales when a family member becomes ill or a friend is in crisis. Keeping to ourselves and maintaining a blind eye to the needs of others may feel fine, until their plight can no longer be ignored. Spending hours binge-watching TV or reading social media posts might seem a good distraction, until our heart calls us to be aware of the very things we're trying to distract ourselves from. The day-to-day routines seem adequate until life changes, and suddenly we find ourselves like Peter, calling to the Lord, "command me to come to you on the water." Call me out of my safe, "normal" life! Reassure me that you will be with me when I reach out to you in trust.

There are times when we falter, unsure if we can get through this moment. We may cry out to God, "Lord, save me!" When that happens, we can be assured that Jesus will stretch out his hand and catch us. Sure of Christ's compassion, mercy, and peace, may we, with disciples throughout the ages declare, "Truly you are the Son of God." - Leisa Anslinger



Do not fear what may happen tomorrow. The same loving Father who cares for you today will care for you tomorrow and every day. Either he will shield you from suffering or he will give you unfailing strength to bear it. Be at peace then, and put aside all anxious thoughts and imaginings.

St. Francis De Sales



Impact this month

Pause regularly for prayer this month. Quiet your mind and heart and pause for a few moments of silent contemplation. Use Psalm 63 or another passage of Scripture as you place your life in God's hands, trusting that God will be with you as you strive to discern and do God's will.

My soul is thirsting for you, O Lord my God. O God, you are my God whom I seek; for you my flesh pines and my soul thirsts like the earth, parched, lifeless and without water. You are my help, and in the shadow of your wings I shout for joy. My soul clings fast to you; your right hand upholds me. (PS 63: 1-2, 6, 8)