

18th SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (A)

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August 2, 2020

Fr. Max Oliva, S.J

There are multiple themes in today's readings; I have chosen to reflect on two of them: the use of nature images in the Bible and the providential love of God.

In the First Reading, from the prophet Isaiah, there is reference to water, grain, wine, and milk: "All who are thirsty, come to the water! You who have no money, come receive grain and eat...Drink wine and milk!" the Creator says to the people through the prophet. In other passages, mountains and trees are often used to illustrate a divine message.

Someone who understood the power in images from nature was St. Francis of Assisi. Here is an excerpt from his famous *Canticle of Brother Sun, Sister Moon*:

*"All praise be yours, my Lord, through all that you have made,
And first my Lord, Brother Sun,
Who brings the day; and light you give to us through him.
All praise be yours, my Lord, through Sister Moon and Stars;
In the heavens you made them bright
And precious and fair.
All praise be yours, my Lord, through Sister Water,
So useful, lowly, precious and pure.
All praise be yours, my Lord, through Sister Earth, our mother,
Who feeds us in her sovereignty and produces
Various fruits with colored flowers and herbs.
Praise and bless my Lord, and give him thanks,
And serve him with great humility."*

St. Francis teaches us that we need to have a reverential attitude toward all creation.

Jesus appreciated the beauty of nature and showed respect for it in his parables. Growing up in rural Galilee he learned about the Creator's care for creation by observing fruit trees, flowers, birds, and sheep. In one poignant passage he used birds to make his point about relying on the providence of God:

"Look at the birds in the sky. They do not sow or reap, they gather nothing into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them."

This brings us to the Gospel for today and the miracle of the five loaves of bread and two fish - that become enough to feed 'a vast crowd' which had gathered to hear Jesus speak:

"Taking the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, Jesus said a blessing, broke the loaves, and gave them to the disciples, who in turn gave them to the crowd."

Not only was there enough for them to eat, there were 12 wicker baskets full of leftovers!

How has God provided for you or for your family? Perhaps you can reflect on the answer to that question in the coming week.

I may have shared with you before how this passage from Matthew's Gospel played a significant role in my life one summer when I went to live in Calcutta, India. (If you have my book, *God of Many Loves*, you will find the story on pages 58-60.)

THE STORY

Fr. Jean-Pierre de Caussade, in his wonderful book, *Abandonment to Divine Providence*, writes;

"There is not a moment in which God is not present to us in his providence." For us, we can say we believe because we walk by faith each day of our lives.

AMEN

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"The Loving Providence of God"