



HOMILY by Father Robbie Low

Corpus Christi-Year C-June 19th 2022

Readings: Genesis 14: 18-20, Psalm 109, 1 Corinthians 11: 23-36, Luke 9: 11-17

Many years ago I was part of a team preparing young people for Confirmation. We went on a couple of days retreat together to seal the deal. We were keen to know if our teaching had hit home in the hearts of our group so, amongst other things, we set a little exercise for them. Pretend you are a newspaper editor in Jerusalem at the time of Jesus. Design the front page with the main headline and two other stories that sum up what is most important about Jesus. Simple. We left them with their huge sheets of paper, markers, crayons etc and went to enjoy a leisurely hour or two on the patio overlooking the garden. Would they go for the Crucifixion? The Resurrection? One of the spectacular healings? On our return we were astonished to find that, working separately, every single group had the same main story. The banner headline was: JESUS FEEDS FIVE THOUSAND ! One group had even updated the story, in a fit of modernism, to have the disciples handing out 'fish and chips'.

Humiliation for all the catechists. The children's fascination with food is mirrored in the subsequent behaviour of the adults in this miracle story. They follow Jesus around thereafter looking for another free lunch. He is

obliged to tell them that what they really need to look out for is not a fish finger sandwich but the food that endures for eternal life.

Of course there is much more going on here than a mere miracle. But let's pause for a moment to look at the second most important character in the story. No, it's not Andrew or Peter or Philip. They have been challenged to provide for this enormous crowd. And they can't do it. As Philip remarks, 'A year's pay wouldn't give them all a scrap.' Andrew then produces the unlikely hero of the story – 'There's a small lad here who has five bread rolls and a couple of pilchards. But what are they among so many?'

But this is the nub of the miracle. No-one is prepared – only this lad. He is offering all that he has to Jesus. Of course he must know, like the disciples, that, humanly speaking, this won't go very far. But, nevertheless, he wants to give it and he does. He has more faith than the disciples, more trust in Jesus than the grown-ups. Then watch what Jesus does.....it is a pattern that will be repeated in the life of the Church throughout the centuries to come. Jesus takes the utterly inadequate but completely faithful gifts of the young lad and raises his eyes to Heaven. He blesses the gifts, gives thanks. He breaks the gifts into pieces and sends them out via his disciples to feed the multitude. It is a fourfold action that is at the heart of the Passover and of the Sacrifice of the Mass. We give ourselves, all that we are, all that we have, to Jesus to do with what He will. In our offering, He unites our offering with His, raises us to Heaven, blesses us, breaks us open that we might be shared and share Him with the world. It is the secret at the heart of the Church and of the Church's mission. As adults we are full of fears and rationalisations – I can't do it. I'm inadequate. God can't work through me etc etc. Here in the Gospel miracle we are led by a child who cannot foresee the immensity of the miracle but simply entrusts all he

has to Jesus. Not only does his five bread rolls and couple of pilchards feed the 5000 but there is symbolically enough left over to feed all the people – 12 baskets for the twelve tribes of Israel. Today, again and here, we are asked to follow our children, to recapture that heart of a child - which is also the hard won wisdom of the saints – that we should have the simple confidence in Jesus to know that, if we offer Him that little everything that we have and are, He will perform the miracle. It is the mystery at the heart of the Mass – we offer our little selves. He feeds us with and makes us into the Body of Christ for the world. Corpus Christi. The bread and wine become the Banquet of Salvation. *Ite Missa est*. We are sent out to invite the world to the Passover, the Mass, the food of eternal life.

Let our children, our most precious gift from God, lead us back to Jesus today.