

Sermon preached by Rev Carole Barnet – 29th July 2018

John 6:1-21

**May I speak in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.**

This morning's Gospel reading recounts two of probably the best-known miracles of Jesus – the feeding of the 5,000 and Jesus walking on water. I'd like to invite you to imagine the first part of the story looking through the eyes of one particular individual

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The boy woke up early that morning. He had a long and arduous journey ahead of him but he couldn't wait to leave the house. He'd heard the stories of the teacher who'd been healing the sick and performing many signs and miracles. This was exciting and the boy had to be there. He had to get close to the teacher and witness these signs for himself. As the sun started to rise, his mother put together a simple lunch and he set out into the dry heat of the day. He simply had to follow the man who was making a difference to people's lives.

The rumours of the man with his followers had spread. As the boy approached, the scene was far from calm. A huge crowd of 5,000 Galileans on the hillside in Roman-occupied Judea crackled with tension. Passover, a festival time when the Jews traditionally share a meal together in their home with family and friends, was near. Yet, up on the mountain, there was nothing to eat. It was tense. It was edgy.

The boy heard the man ask one of his followers the impossible question - how they were going to feed so many people. The follower, called Philip, responded that - "Six months' wages would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little". Then, amongst the jostling and noisy men, the attention turned to the boy – the only one with any food at all. But what use would his meagre offering of five loaves and two fish be among so many?

Then, the man, known as Jesus, "took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them", and also the fish, and the people ate until they were satisfied, and afterwards, the fragments left over "filled twelve baskets".

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The crowd had witnessed the power of God's grace. They'd been fed, refreshed and experienced for themselves, a sign of God's generosity and his abundant love for all people. The boy had made a difference by responding to Jesus' call to give to the needs of others. And what a difference that made. Everyone had been satisfied and the boy had helped to show that, for God, anything is possible.

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I was shocked recently to read a report that 75,000 school children this summer in our own City will rely on food banks – not 5,000 - but 75,000 in our own backyard.

In this miracle Jesus asks his followers to respond to a seemingly impossible situation. Just like the 5,000 people who followed Jesus up the mountain, we too have been drawn into his community of faith and nurture and are invited to make a difference. As with the boy, Jesus invites us to work with him to achieve the impossible. Jesus asks us to give out of what we have, to show his love for others through *our* generosity. Those little barley loaves and fish the boy brought along were clearly not enough, yet Jesus took the meagre offering and made a feast for 5,000, with an abundance left over. Whenever there is a crisis on our doorstep, what we have to offer may seem just as woefully inadequate for the task, and yet in giving of what we have, we feed others, but also are fed ourselves and we, too, can make a difference. God simply invites us to follow Jesus in all that we do and, by doing so, it will bring new life and new hope to others and we also will be satisfied.

And this is the reason we are here today. Here we will meet Jesus and we will be fed and renewed by the riches of God's grace as we witness, experience and celebrate the life-giving sacraments of both Holy Baptism and the Eucharist.

First, we will welcome two young people into a new life in our community of faith as Jay and Riley are Baptised. Baptism itself is a sign, a response to the message and call of Jesus, and these two boys will start their faith journey as new followers of Jesus today. They will be anointed with oil, be sprinkled with water, and will each receive a candle. Through these three signs, Jay and Riley will be joined into a new life with Jesus. And, we as their new family, will promise to care for them and support and nurture them in their faith journeys.

As we move into the Eucharist, the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves is played out as bread is broken to feed us. Here, we will feast on the simplest elements of daily life. In feeding on Christ's body and blood, we will be fed and satisfied.

The invitation today for each and every one of us is simple. It is to follow Jesus and bear witness to his example. As we feast on these Holy Sacraments; as we respond to God's call; as we reach out to support and nurture others, not only will we make a difference by sharing signs of God's grace and love, but we also will be fed, refreshed and satisfied.

Amen.