

'GOD'S SURPRISING RESPONSES TO OUR LIFE PRAYERS' – 29 JULY 2018

17th Sunday Ordinary Time. 2018

Let us prayerfully read today's Gospel.

GOSPEL OF JOHN 6:1-15

*'After this Jesus went to the other side of the Sea of Galilee,
also called the Sea of Tiberias.
A large crowd kept following him,
because they saw the signs that he was doing for the sick.
Jesus went up the mountain and sat down there with his disciples.*

*Now the Passover, the festival of the Jews, was near.
When he looked up and saw a large crowd coming towards him,
Jesus said to Philip,
'Where are we to buy bread for these people to eat?'
He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he was going to do.*

*Philip answered him,
'Six months' wages would not buy enough bread
for each of them to get a little.'*

*One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him,
'There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish.
But what are they among so many people?'*

*Jesus said,
'Make the people sit down.'
Now there was a great deal of grass in the place;
so they sat down, about five thousand in all.*

*Then Jesus took the loaves, and when he had given thanks,
he distributed them to those who were seated;
so also the fish, as much as they wanted.*

*When they were satisfied, he told his disciples,
'Gather up the fragments left over, so that nothing may be lost.'
So they gathered them up,
and from the fragments of the five barley loaves,
left by those who had eaten, they filled twelve baskets.*

*When the people saw the sign that he had done, they began to say,
'This is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world.'*

*When Jesus realized that they were about to come
and take him by force to make him king,
he withdrew again to the mountain by himself.'*

DETAILS FROM JOHN'S GOSPEL CHAPTER 6

In the three yearly Sunday Gospel Cycle of Matthew, Mark and Luke, the Church pauses in this Year of Mark's Gospel - the shortest Gospel - and listens for five weeks to the fourth Gospel of **John** Chapter 6.

With the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke, and letters of Paul already in existence by the time John's Gospel is written, we ask why John highlights specific passages.

For five Sundays, we can explore this chapter from John. It reveals so much about our relationship with God.

- John sets the **TIME** of year,
'Now the Passover, the festival of the Jews, was near.'
- And the **GEOGRAPHY**
*'the other side of the Sea of Galilee,
also called the Sea of Tiberias.'*
- And the **SETTING**
'Jesus went up the mountain and sat down there with his disciples.'
- And the **PERCEIVED NEED** of people
'because they saw the signs that he was doing for the sick'
- And later the **MISGUIDED INTENTION** of many
*'they were about to come
and take him by force to make him king'*
- And the **PEOPLE PRESENT**
Philip, Andrew, a boy, a large crowd, disciples
- And the **GENEROSITY AND ABUNDANCE OF GOD'S BLESSINGS**,
*'Gather up the fragments left over, so that nothing may be lost.'
So they gathered them up,
and from the fragments of the five barley loaves,
left by those who had eaten, they filled twelve baskets.'*

THE GIFT OF JESUS

And as the chapter unfolds,
we discover more about **the gift that Jesus offers us,**
the gift that nourishes us,
the gift that answers our prayer - though sometimes not in a way we expect -
the gift of Jesus himself.

QUESTIONS WE ASK

In John's account we ask:

HOW AND WHERE DOES GOD SHARE OUR JOURNEY?

WHAT DO WE PRAY FOR?

FOR WHOM DO WE PRAY?

WHO ARE THE PEOPLE IN THE STORY OF OUR LIVES?

DO WE PRAY FOR THEM?

WHAT ARE OUR PERCEIVED NEEDS?

WHAT ARE OUR REAL NEEDS?

DO WE HAVE MISGUIDED INTENTIONS?

HOW DOES GOD CLARIFY OUR VISION, AND HENCE OUR OWN INTENTIONS?

HOW DOES GOD NOURISH US?

John presents a pattern.

For example - the multiplication of loaves near the Passover feast,
where the abundance of God's protection in the Exodus is celebrated.

ARE WE AWARE OF THE PATTERNS IN WHICH GOD ANSWERS OUR PRAYER?

GOD'S UNFOLDING RESPONSE TO A PARTICULAR PRAYER

Briefly I share the story of a **pattern** in the way

God has been answering a particular prayer over several years.

This story relates to a prayer once to work for six weeks
in a particular country with refugees.

And how God answered the prayer in different ways,
according to God's ways.

God surprises us and blesses us abundantly.

Instead of working for six weeks with refugees in that country,
the project was cancelled, and I ended up visiting PNG.

It was a wonderful though brief introduction to cultural variety and mission,
and the importance of listening.

In **Aitape** on the northern coast of PNG,

local people related to me how the prayer of a small contemplative community
of **Poor Clare Sisters** was the heartbeat, the centre of the mission.

Prayer has to be at the very centre of our lives.

Some years later I was enrolled in a social justice course for five months.
The venue was changed to the country of my original prayer.
An unexpended answer to prayer years before.
Contact with refugee families would be in unexpected ways
in the early 1990s,
and now in our own welcoming parish community.

GOD'S WAYS

God chooses the timing and the ways.

We commit to **prayer being at the very core of who we are,**
and in our **relationship with Jesus.**

Let us **trust in God's ways.**

You are now invited to choose a deep prayer from your own life.

WHAT DID YOU INTEND?

AND HOW HAS GOD BEEN ANSWERING THAT PRAYER IN WAYS YOU NEVER EXPECTED?

Answering you with a much wider vision of your life that you expected.

As the Gospel of John Chapter 6 unfolds over the next few weeks,
may we journey with Philip and Andrew from today's Gospel
as we learn God's ways.

And discover more about **the gift that Jesus offers us,**
the gift that nourishes us,
the gift that answers our prayer,
the gift of Jesus himself.

Let us pray.

Fr Gerry

[Readings: <http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/072918.cfm>]

[Parish Facebook: <http://bit.ly/parishFacebook29072018>]

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HOMILY: GOD'S SURPRISING RESPONSES TO OUR LIFE PRAYERS



“...Jesus took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated; so also the fish, as much as they wanted...”

“God chooses the timing and the ways. We commit to prayer being at the very core of who we are, and in our relationship with Jesus. Let us trust in God’s ways.”

Fr. Gerry

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