

DO WE NEED ANOTHER MIRACLE OF THE LOAVES AND FISHES TODAY?



This Sunday we hear the familiar Gospel story of the loaves and fishes. Sunday is also the Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ.

The story is that at the end of the day the apostles asked Jesus to dismiss the crowds so that they could find dinner. Instead, Jesus took five loaves and two fish – all that was available – said the blessing over them, broke them, and gave them to the disciples to set before the crowd.

The crowd all ate and were satisfied. And when the leftover fragments were picked up, they filled twelve wicker baskets.

A multiplication of the loaves and fishes today could fix the hunger problem.

In Oregon, nearly one out of every two of our children were poor or low-income in 2011. One in four lived in poverty.

Take a classroom of third-graders and count off in twos: one, two (LOW-INCOME); one, two (POOR); one, two (LOW-INCOME); one, two (POOR).

More than 75% – 294,000 – of the poor and low-income children relied on food stamps to eat. Dismissing them from school so that they could find something to eat isn't going to work very often, especially when most of them eat because of free and reduced school breakfasts and lunches.

A miracle would solve the hunger problem of our Archdiocese, our state, our country and our world. Though I believe in miracles, do we need one here? In 2011, Pope Benedict XVI said that the United Nations' own studies show that global food production is able to feed the world's population – which makes the situations of hunger all the more unjust. "Poverty, underdevelopment and, therefore, hunger are often the result of selfish behaviors that, born in the human heart, manifest themselves in social life, economic exchange, in market conditions and in the lack of access to food," the pope said.

Pope Benedict said persistent world hunger was a "tragedy" driven by selfish and profit-driven economic models.

Perhaps we don't need another miracle of loaves and fishes but a miracle of the converted heart. When we open ourselves up to the power and the love of the Eucharist, we are transformed.

As Cardinal Ratzinger, Pope Benedict wrote, "For this reason, in my prayer at communion, I must look totally toward Christ, allowing myself to be transformed by him, even to be burned by his enveloping fire. But, precisely for this reason, I must always keep clearly in mind that in this way he unites me organically with every other person receiving him – with the one next to me, whom I may not like very much; but also with those who are far away, in Asia, Africa, America or in any other place." *Eucharist, Communion and Solidarity*

Celebrating the Eucharist transforms us individually and as members of a community called to bring love and hope to people living in poverty.

"Whoever recognizes the Lord in the tabernacle, recognizes him in the suffering and the needy; they are among those to whom the world's judge will say: 'I was hungry and you gave me food; I was thirsty and you gave me drink; I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me'" (Mt 25:35). *Cardinal Ratzinger, Eucharist, Communion and Solidarity*

The answer is no, we do not need another miracle of the loaves and fishes; we need to understand what it means to partake in the Eucharist and then live that as we are sent into the world at the end of mass.

(Readings for Feast of Corpus Christi)