

17th Sunday in Ordinary Time.  
All Saints Parish, Syracuse, NY

Father Andy Szebenyi S.J.

My dear Brothers and Sisters. Jesus is a teacher explaining God's love and mercy. Jesus is a healer of all ills, and a provider for all our needs. In today's Gospel-reading we meet Jesus the loving and caring provider for our basic needs in a situation where usual measures were not sufficient. In a miracle of the multiplication of five barley loaves and two fish he feeds more than 5000 people. It is very clear that his motivation is to take care of the people, because, when they wanted to make him a king in response to this miracle, he withdrew in the mountain alone and they could not find him. Jesus is teacher, healer, and provider, bringing us God's love and mercy.

But let us consider briefly what happened on that mountainside? There was a boy who had five barley loaves and two fish, and Jesus took the loaves and the fish, said the blessing, and gave them to the disciples to feed all the people. And what was left over filled 12 wicker baskets, which was obviously more than the five loaves they started with. Of course this was a wonderful miracle, but at the same time we should not forget that even greater miracles are part of our everyday lives in the framework of ordinary time. Think for a moment. A man went out and planted wheat in a field. The seed fell on good soil and produced 30, 60, and 100 fold. This has been brought about by the man's labor, but much more than his labor, by God's created given, an even greater miracle than the multiplication of the five barley loaves. And we say, well that is not a miracle, it is only natural.

My dear Sisters and Brothers. Sometimes we may not see God's loving presence, and we lose hope, and are afraid, because we fail to see with the eyes of faith with a vision that gives true meaning to life. One day I read this in an email with the title: Whispers.

The man whispered, "God, speak to me" and a meadowlark sang. But, the man did not hear. So the man yelled, "God, speak to me" and the thunder rolled across the sky. But, the man did not listen. The man looked around and said, "God let me see you." And a star shined brightly. But the man did not see. And, the man shouted, "God show me a miracle." And, a life was born. But, the man did not notice. So, the man cried out in despair, "Touch me God, and let me know you are here." Whereupon, God reached down and touched the man. But, the man brushed the butterfly away and walked on.

I found this story to be a great reminder that God is always with us in the little and simple things that we take for granted ... even in our electronic age. So I would like to add one more: The man cried, "God, I need your help!" And an e-mail arrived reaching out with good news and encouragement. We should not just delete it and continue crying.

My dear Sisters and Brothers. We are surrounded by God's loving and caring miracles every moment in our lives, even when we may think that it is not so. But then God takes us by the hand and calls us by name, and finally our eyes of faith open and we begin to see God's infinite love and mercy in all things. And that fill us with a deep sense of peace and joy. Amen.