

JULY 31, 2011

EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

MATTHEW 14:13-21

Most of us in one way or another have experienced the death of someone very near and dear to us. A recent experience of my own is the death of my sister who had been like a second mother to me. My grief was immediate and deep. I invite you to recall a grief experience of your own as you reflect on today's gospel reading.

Jesus' cousin and precursor, John, has just died. It is no surprise that Jesus, in his human way, withdrew to a deserted place to be alone in his grief. Many of us also, needing to recollect ourselves do the same at a time like this.

The sad news soon reached the people of the surrounding towns who knew about the close relationship that existed between John and Jesus. So in haste they set out to find Jesus and soon found him disembarking from a boat. They went to meet him to console him in his grief. Upon seeing the crowd, Jesus set aside his personal grief and was moved to another grief—a broader grief: pity for the people. In his compassion, he took the occasion to heal the sick and to comfort them. Touched by his compassion, they followed him to an open space and he invited them to sit down. The gospel writer recalls the amazement of those who were fed in that "lonely place" that day.

The natural tendency is to stop at the bare facts of the miracle and miss the deeper significance of what actually happened. The "food" of compassion, love, and care exercised here are definitive signs of the presence of the Reign of God—which can come to us even if we are in a "lonely place" of grief or worry. The parable is finally brought to a level where people can understand what the Reign of God is all about: God's power is manifested for the sake of ALL!

This Sunday's gospel helps us to realize God's Reign in our everyday lives. We can't make the Reign present by ourselves. What the disciples cannot do alone, but Jesus' blessing can reach into a "lonely place" and so can we. We already share the Kingdom because we have received LIFE. The presence of the Kingdom is a presence of LIFE LIVED FULLY!

--Sr. Alexia Vinklerek, CDP

For reflections or sharing:

- ▲ Where do you look when you have a need in your life?
- ▲ Recall a time when you felt lonely, powerless to respond to someone's request.
- ▲ In your life today, what are you hungry for?

The Kingdom of God is where people are willing to go because they have an extra measure of the oil of determination, self-reliance, and missionary availability.