

Paul had received a special pre-Christmas gift from his rich brother. It was a beautiful new car - fully loaded and ready to go. On Christmas Eve, when Paul came out of his office, a street kid was walking around the shiny new car, admiring it. "Is this your car, mister?" the kid asked. When he replied that it was and that his brother had given it to him for Christmas, the boy said, "You mean your brother gave it to you, and it didn't cost you anything? Free? For nothing? Gosh, I wish..." The boy hesitated, and Paul knew what he was about to say. He had heard it many times over the past few days. He was going to wish he had a brother like that. But what the boy said shocked Paul. "*I wish*", the boy said, "*I wish I could be a brother like that.*" -- We can be a brother like that or a sister like that. All it takes is that we offer ourselves and what we have, to God. All it takes is that we cease to worry about how little we have and begin instead to think about what it is that we can offer to others.

I want you to look at our readings about how, as intentional disciples, we can actually become instruments in the hands of God. In the first reading we hear about Elisha, a disciple of the prophet Elijah, learned the miracle of multiplication from him and in the Gospel reading, we hear about the multiplication of loaves (also known as the first Olive Garden in history with endless breadsticks), a reading and miracle so important that it, and the story of the resurrection, are the only two miracles that can be found in all four gospels.

The question we should always be asking is what does this mean to me? How can I apply these lessons in my life? I often had thoughts that, of course Jesus or St. Paul or Elijah or Elisha can do these things, they were rock stars...but me? Definitely not me, what can I possibly multiply? What results could I possibly bring to the table? This miracle and lesson is so important that we must be able to multiply something. St. Paul addresses this a bit in the second reading, he speaks of the qualities of a good disciple; but I want you to notice that it isn't based upon the results we should get; he speaks of humility, gentleness, patience and love.

That is what we can do...St. Paul gives us a way in which we can apply these lessons and in the spirit of summer coming to an end soon and school getting back in session, we're going to do a little math. Elisha, Elijah and Jesus were able to multiply loaves to feed those in need. We all agree that it's highly unlikely that we can do that, but we can multiply the humility, gentleness, patience and love that St. Paul talks about. If we look at it as a math problem, I want you to see the first number of the problem as that which God gives you, the blessings, the relationship, the love, the patience, the forgiveness. Assign whatever number you want to that, if you feel that the number is one because only his love matters that's fine, if you want to assign that number as 100 because he has given you so many blessings, that works also. Now I want you to look at the multiplication symbol as the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is here to help us, to be our guide in applying the will of God. The second number is the important one, it is what we choose to do with what God has given us (the first number) and how we are going to apply it (the Holy Spirit / multiplication symbol). If we do nothing and that number is "0", we are putting nothing positive into the world, we stopping God's love through us and "0" is what we will get out of it. If we live in that love but don't necessarily spread it, then that number is a "1" and, if people see that in us, we are showing them what God's love and blessings can do. But if we show them, and talk about it, and teach it, and live by it, what does the number become...it multiplies over and over, just like the loaves.

An interesting thing can be seen in the Gospel reading today, both Phillip and Andrew seem to have missed the fact that Jesus said “we” when he asked about how they were going to feed the people. They focused on a task that they felt was impossible when Jesus asked “Where can WE buy enough food for them to eat?” They felt overwhelmed by what Christ was asking them, without listening to what he was asking them and thinking about Him being the solution. When we are asked by our Lord to do something we feel is difficult or impossible, we must remember that Christ is there to be with us and help us. In this way, we will never stop being disciples, intentional disciples, and Jesus will continue to use us to multiply His works and His blessings until the number reaches infinity.

I want you all to remember that even a one on our side of the “math problem” adds to the glory of God, that only ignoring or downplaying it adds the zero which results in adding zero glory. I also want you to remember what happens if we go the other way, if we add to negativity, if we purposely go against what God asks us, what we are taught, what blessings we receive...if we add a negative in our number. Then we multiply that negativity and if we claim to be Christians that live in Christ, but we are adding a negative, people will relate how we are with who we claim to follow and look at Christ and His followers in a negative light.

We can and we must do all that is possible to multiply the presence of the Lord in our lives, in our families, in our communities and in our world. We’re not being called to multiply loaves and fishes, we’re being called to multiply humility, gentleness, patience and love. Think of how amazing, impactful and memorable this feeding was on the lives of those it affected. Now think about how much of an impact you too could have on the lives of those you model Christ to...think about the impact you can have if you multiply His visibility, His works and His teachings in the world today. That’s what the world needs today...not breadsticks and fish...it needs humility, patience and love.

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Christ the King, Pueblo Colorado