

August 2, 2015 – 18th Sunday of Ordinary Time

God is Very Empathetic

There is a risk in having an engineer be your homilist!

We engineers are into numbers and patterns.

How many times have I started a homily by commenting how a specific word caught my attention because it appeared two or three times in the readings.

That repetition led me to believe that there was a message there for us.

Can you guess which word caught my attention today?

"Bread" is certainly repeated - sixteen times in total.

The word that caught my attention is "*give*".

It is in the Exodus reading once.

It is in the Psalm five times.

It is in the Gospel six times.

Yes, twelve times in all!

Twelve is a very biblical number - a number used by Scripture writers to indicate fullness.

The pattern is even more amazing when we see that in each and every case the one who does the *giving* is God!

God *gives*. ... And *gives*.

Instead of speaking about the *gift*, the Bread of Life, let us look at "God the *Giver*".

What do we know about "God the *Giver*"?

Our creed starts out telling us that God is the creator of heaven and earth.

Yes, God is the initiator, the instigator, the prime mover, the one who has *given* us everything in the universe.

Have you possibly seen the newest photos of the dwarf planet Pluto?

NASA launched a spacecraft 9 years ago - 9 YEARS AGO - to travel all the way out there to photograph Pluto.

Now we can finally see what Pluto looks like.

We now know more about our little solar system.

And, God ***gave*** us Pluto along with the sun, the moon, our Earth, our whole solar system.

And God ***gave*** us the Milky Way, the home of our solar system and billions of other stars.

And God ***gave*** us the universe with approximately 170 billion galaxies.

The number of galaxies and the number of stars and the number of planets is absolutely mind-boggling.

And God created all of that, the whole universe.

God ***gave*** all of that, the whole universe.

Given that perspective of largeness of the universe people have sometimes drawn the conclusion:

How does God have any time for little old me?

How can God care about little old me?

Isn't that what we hear in today's reading from Exodus.

The Israelites were wandering in the desert and felt ignored by God. God ***gave*** them a sign of his continuing love and care.

He sent the manna to feed them.

That was not the first time, nor the last time, that people have worried about God's care for them.

God addressed that on-going worry about God's care for us by giving us Jesus ... the ***gift*** of God himself!

Jesus ... here is God in flesh and blood - just like us.

Jesus ... here is someone who has emotions like us, has feelings like us, who has pains like us, who suffers and dies like us.

Jesus ... here is someone who assures us that God continually, always, forever cares for us ... and is here with us ... ***gives*** himself to us.

Jesus has empathy for us.

I have empathy when I understand and feel another's feelings for myself.

Let me say that again.

You have empathy when you understand and feel another's feelings for yourself.

Jesus had empathy with the hungry people when he fed 5000 like he did in last week's Gospel.

The ushers will now pass out a book mark with a reminder of how God relates to us ... that ***God Is Very Empathetic***.

That is why God sent Jesus 2000 years ago.

That is why God continues to be present at all times, and most especially here in the parish community, in the Sacred Scriptures, in the Eucharist - at each Mass - in each host - in each drop of wine.

God ***gives***, and ***gives***, and ***gives***.

Our second message for today is that we are to imitate God.

We are to have empathy with others.

We are to ***give*** to others.

Here in our church community we see so many signs of people trying to imitate God by ***giving***.

We have Lectors who ***give*** us the Word of the Lord in our Scripture readings.

We have Catechists who ***give*** us the Word of the Lord:

- in Catechesis of the Good Shepherd
- in Sacramental preparation for children
- in Generations of Faith
- in RCIA for those coming into our faith and our community.

We have our Evangelization Committee who is currently going Door-to-Door to *give* the Good News to neighbors here in our area.

We have St. Vincent de Paul members who *give* aid to those in our neighborhood.

We have our musicians and choir who *give* us a prayerful environment for singing the psalms and other hymns

We have our ministers of Holy Communion who *give* us the body and blood of our Lord at Communion time.

Would all our ministers who help distribute the bread and wine, the Body and Blood, at Mass please rise so we can acknowledge your gift to us! This last Wednesday evening 28 of our ministers of Holy Communion came out on a hot summer's night for an evening of renewal in their ministry.

For all of us here I thanked them for their dedication and service.

Would you please *give* them applause for their *gift* to us!

For those ministers of Holy Communion who could not come on Wednesday evening please see me after Mass so I can *give* you my thanks -- personally.

And so we learn from God.

God *gives* ... and *gives* ... and *gives*.

GIVE ...G...I...V...E.

God Is Very Empathetic.

We are to imitate God and *give* to others.