

DO YOU BELIEVE IN MIRACLES?

by Dcn. Tom McConnell

17TH Sunday OT

Year B

2Kgs 4:42-44; Ps 145:10-11,15-18; Eph 4:1-6; Jn 6:1-15

Little Johnny was in Sunday school and his mother came to pick him up. “*Boy,*” exclaimed Johnny as he settled himself into the car, “*that story of Moses and all those people crossing the Red Sea was something else!*”

“*Tell me all about it,*” said his mother.

“*Well, the Israelites got out of Egypt, but Pharaoh and his army chased after them. So, the Jews ran as fast as they could until they got to the Red Sea. The Egyptian Army was getting closer and closer. So, Moses got on his walkie-talkie and told the Israeli Air Force to bomb the Egyptians. While that was happening, the Israeli Navy built a pontoon bridge so the people could cross over. They all made it!*”

His mother was shocked, and asked, “*Is that the way they taught you the story?*”

“*Well, no, not exactly,*” admitted Johnny, “*but, Mom, if I told you the way they told it to us, you'd never believe it!*”

Young as he was, little Johnny had imbibed the secular mentality of our age that makes no room for miracles nor spiritual realities. Natural faith, which is limited only to what we can observe and verify, hinders the believer from arriving at that supernatural faith, without which we cannot experience the miraculous hand of God.

In today's Gospel story of the Feeding of the Five Thousand, St. John mentions two disciples by name: Philip and Andrew. These two disciples can be seen as representing two types of faith. Philip represents the naturalistic faith that does not allow for miracles, while Andrew represents supernatural faith that makes room for miracles and, so, makes miracles possible.

Jesus and his disciples had a problem. The large crowd of people following them were hungry and needed to be fed. Jesus turns to Philip and asks, “*Where are we to buy bread for these people to eat?*” (John 6:5) Why does

Jesus turn to Philip and why does he ask him about buying bread? Jesus probably knew that Philip, in his material-mindedness, could not imagine any other way of feeding that crowd except through the use of money.

That’s why St. John adds to the story: “*He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he was going to do.*”(verse 6) Philip's answer only confirms how good he was in material computation: “*Two hundred days' wages would not buy enough bread for each of them to even get a little.*”(quote verse 7) **But Jesus knew what he would do. He only addressed this question to Philip as a way of stirring up Philip's materialistic thinking in order, later, to disabuse him of it.**

Just then Andrew, one of the disciples standing by, whose faith was more expectant than Philip’s, spoke up:

“*There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish. But what are they among so many people?*”(verse 9)

Andrew was realistic enough to know that five loaves and

two fish were nothing before a crowd of 5,000 men, in addition to women and children, yet he had sufficient faith to see that it was enough for a start. Perhaps Andrew mentioned the fish and loaves to Jesus because he remembered the marriage feast at Cana where Jesus turned water into wine. He remembered that Jesus did not make wine out of nothing; he made it out of something. And it is the disciples' duty first to provide that basic something which Jesus, in his love and compassion, would then transform...like water into wine...or multiply, like bread to feed the hungry crowd.

Expectant faith, therefore, does not make us fold our hands doing nothing, looking up to heaven. Rather, it spurs us on to make our best contribution...our five loaves and two fish...knowing that without it, there would be no miracle. A miracle is not God working for us; it is God working with us.

Henry Ford once said, “*Whether you think you can or not, you are right.*” The same can be said about whether you believe in miracles or not. Believers, by believing, enable miracles to happen in their lives. Non-believers, by not believing, block their chances of experiencing a miracle. As Jesus often said, “*According to your faith, will it be done to you.*”(Matthew 9:29)

Let’s put our belief, in one of the greatest miracles of our catholic faith, into practice this evening/morning, and let’s receive the body, blood, soul, and divinity of Christ Himself found in the consecrated bread and wine of the Eucharistic miracle. Let us follow the Psalmist’s advice: “*Come and taste of the Lord, and see that He is good!*”(Ps 34:8)

God bless you all!!