

18th Sunday in Ordinary Time: August 2, 2020

St. Vincent de Paul Church, Baltimore

A Reflection on the Gospel: *The Giving Child*

I selected this story because I believe in the power of logarithmic reality, how something small can become many, a side of mathematics all too neglected. But rather than expound upon the logarithmic reality around us in scientific fashion—as I have in a recently published work called *The Ten Pulses of Evolution*—I offer a more literary rendition of the story of the loaves and fishes. This story I might have titled “The Foolish Boy,” but I will, in the spirit of the Gospel, title it “The Giving Child.”

We know the story: a boy gives away his bread and fish to some hungry strangers. He trusted them, thought it was the right thing to do.

“He’ll be in trouble when he goes back to his parents,” some nearby strangers said.

So the boy comes back to his parents ...

“Where are the loaves and fishes?” asked his mother.

“Oh, I gave them to some men. They said they needed them.”

“And you just gave them all you had?”

“I did.”

“What about us? What will we eat?”

“They said the Master will provide.”

“Foolish boy! You believed them? You have given away all our food. And where are the baskets?”

When the father found out, he was irate, and the parents started to argue.

“Don’t punish him,” pleaded the mother. “You know he’s simple like that. And you give to vagrants in the village. He was just—”

The father became only angrier, “When I give, there is enough left for us! Can’t you see? No one around us has hardly any food. We were one of the lucky ones. And now...” The man summoned his best self. He did not strike the child, though no one around him would have disapproved.

Then they heard a roar in distance and wondered what was happening.

“There’s something else we came for,” reminded the mother.

“Yes, I know,” said the father... “But good words can’t feed us!”

Then it came; someone close to them had food: then someone else to their side.

Would they share with us? A man close by comes over and offers them bread in hand.

“Here take, there’s enough to eat.”

So the boy’s family had enough to eat, and they heard good words to match

The teacher was distant, but his voice was strong.

“We have been fed today,” marveled the father. “We are blessed. And we got to see the teacher so many have talked about. If the crowds did not press so, I would have had him bless our child.”

“It’s good you’ve forgiven the boy. You can bless him,” said the mother.

“It is easier when things end up well,” acknowledged the father.

The crowd was breaking up and yet another commotion sounded.

Some men were coming their way, some of the teacher’s disciples.

“Yes, this is the boy,” one man pointed out.

“What has he done? He has done nothing!” the father defended.

“He was the one with the bread and fishes,” the disciple insisted. “He gave it to us.”

“Yes he did.... with my approval.”

“You misunderstand us. Your boy has done nothing wrong. The teacher only wishes to bless him.”

The followers of his had opened a path and the teacher soon appeared. He came up to the boy, placed his hand on his head and blessed him.

“Thank you for the bread and fish you shared this day,” said the teacher.

“I was just doing what you said, sir,” said the boy. “It’s a blessing to give.”

“How do you know this? I had not shared this saying yet!”

“What saying, sir?” asked the boy.

“Since you ask, I will share it now. ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”

Then the teacher looked up at the father and mother. “Your child is blessed to have both good teachers and parents.”

The father however felt compelled to confess, “Forgive me, teacher, I....

“Yes,” the teacher interrupted, holding up his hand. “But your love was greater than your anger. Would there but more like you and your child.”

The parents treasured all these words, then heard later of another saying the teacher said soon after. “Except you be as a child, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.”

And they looked at their child and wondered more.