

HOMILY 18th SUN Ordinary Time

August 2, 2020

In the Gospel reading today we hear an account of the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves and the fishes. We have heard it so many times that we may miss how big the miracle is. I was reading a story about a catering company that fed 3,000 people at a meal. The menu consisted of salad, shrimp, sliced turkey, filet, a side of pasta and brownies for dessert. The meal took a full week to prepare. They had 1,000 lbs of shrimp, 70 turkeys, 700 lbs of filet, 35 electric roasters of pasta, a large baby bathtub of salad and dozens of 3 by 5 feet sheets of brownies. And they only served 3,000. Jesus served 5,000 men plus women and children! Jesus does not allow the disciples to pass on the problem to someone else. He starts with what the disciples have and together they performed a great miracle. We do not know exactly how, but they did.

I can only imagine what the disciples thought when Jesus told them to feed the 5,000 themselves! They must have thought: “are you out of your mind? We have no idea how to even begin.” But they had faith. Jesus asked them to bring to him what they had, five loaves and two fish, and that is what they did. Jesus wanted them to start with what they had and together they did great things.

Our brains have two ways of processing our world. I am going to call them the fast brain and the slow brain. When we use our fast brain we are really processing the situation based upon our biases, and many of them are unconscious. We make

judgments upon our background, what we have been taught, what we have experienced and what we have observed. We move toward and away from people and situations based upon these biases, many of which are unconscious. In many ways we could not survive without these unconscious biases. If we stopped and rationally thought through every judgment and every decision we made, we would be immobilized and would never get anything done. In some situations, our unconscious biases are good. For example, if you are stopped at a red light in your car, when the light turns green, you go. You are assuming that the light for the crossing traffic is red, so those cars will stop. You do not think about it. You do not get out of your car and walk over and make sure the light is red and then ask the people in the cars if they know that they have to stop at a red light. By the time you do all of that, your light would be red again and you would never get through the light. But sometimes our unconscious bias it is rooted in inaccurate information and we make bad judgments or decisions. In these situations, we have to make the unconscious inaccurate information to our slow brain. To look at a situation with our slow brain, we need to take it to prayer. We need to quietly look at the situation in God's presence and ask for His help. This is how we gain wisdom. In the Gospel, the disciples first looked at the 5,000 hungry people with their fast brain and decided that they had to send the people away to get their own food. Jesus invited them to look at the situation with their slow brain to bring him what they had and see what they could do with God's

help. We need to identify when we need to slow down and identify what we need to take to prayer.

In many situations we look at a situation with our fast brain and based upon unconscious bias we conclude that it is too big of a problem for us to solve and move away from it. If everyone looked at big problems with that unconscious bias, with their fast brain, no big problems would ever get solved. Sometimes in our lives we get so caught up in business that we only act with our fast brain. We never use our slow brain so we never gain wisdom. That may be one of the good things about the coronavirus. Many things have stopped, giving us the chance to use our slow brains.

One of the big problems of our times is that we tend to identify ourselves with particular groups and we are acting upon unconscious biases that are inaccurate about other groups. We treat our opinions about other groups as though they were fact, and in reality they are only opinions. We need to start by recognizing that we all have unconscious biases about people of other political parties, other races, other religions, other countries. We need to take them to prayer with our slow brain. We need to make our biases conscious and identify the inaccuracies. We need to reach out and very purposely try to understand the people of other groups to see how we can work together to make this a better world. We may be telling God these problems are too big we cannot solve them. I think Jesus is telling us to solve them ourselves. Bring me what you have and we can accomplish big things.