

**Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time – Year A  
(Aug. 3, 2014)**

***The Abundant Generosity of Our God***

There seems to be one basic message in our readings today, at least as I read them. Our God is a generous God. Our God has an abundance of gifts. Our God has a deep desire not just to share but to lavish those gifts upon all of us. These are some of the most positive and encouraging passages in all our scriptures.

In the first reading, through the prophet Isaiah, God invites the people to come and receive gifts in abundance without paying, without any effort, just to come and to accept them. Who could refuse?

From the Letter to the Romans we heard Paul's firm conviction about God's love. There is nothing, absolutely nothing in this world or the next that could ever possibly separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Paul seems overwhelmed, almost ecstatic as he waxes enthusiastically about the love of God.

And then there is that wonderful story of the generosity of God: the multiplication of the loaves and fishes. We hear it so often perhaps we no longer are awed by its message, because this is not just about magic, Jesus pulling loaves of bread out of a hat. It's a story first of all, of compassion. Jesus has pity on the people and wants to do something to help them, just as God wants to help all of us. It's a story of confidence, the trust that Jesus had that God would provide sufficient food for all. It's a story about generosity, God's generosity who not only gives enough bread for the multitude but even has twelve baskets left over.

God's generosity! God's lavish generosity! That's what we see in all three of these readings. Now wouldn't you like to experience some of that generosity? Well, you can, you know. Let me tell you about someone who did.

This past Thursday was the Feast of St. Ignatius of Loyola, founder of the Jesuits. It's a special day for us Jesuits here at Holy Trinity and Georgetown University. And it should be a special day for all of you as parishioners of Holy Trinity, since Jesuits, sons of St. Ignatius, have served

this parish since it was founded.

Ignatius was someone who had a direct and vivid experience of God's abundant generosity, and he was convinced that others could have that same experience.

You are familiar, I am sure, with the story of his conversion: how he was wounded in a battle, and while recovering at Loyola began reading the life of Christ and the lives of saints. He was so moved by his reading that he decided to change his life completely. From a swash-buckling, pleasure seeking youth, he became a pilgrim searching for the will of God in his life. This was already a great grace. There would be more to come.

His search for God took him to a cave in Manresa, near Barcelona, where he spent 11 months in prayer. During that time he had many more experiences of God's love for him and the great gifts that God wanted to bestow upon him. He kept a record of what happened to him in his prayer and that record eventually developed into the little book that we call *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*.

As I said earlier Ignatius was convinced that others could have the same experience of God as he did, and so he started helping them to pray according to the method that had served him so well and that he recorded in the book of the *Spiritual Exercises*. Jesuits have used these Exercises for centuries, and today we have come to understand that they are not just for Jesuits or for priests and religious but for anyone who is sincerely seeking to pray and to find the will of God in his or her life.

Through the Ignatian Spirituality Center, our parish offers to anyone who wishes the opportunity to reflect and pray according to the Ignatian method, the method of the *Spiritual Exercises*, which we call Ignatian Spirituality.

And I personally invite all of you to take advantage of this opportunity. It's a great occasion for learning new ways to pray, to find God in all things and to perhaps have some of those same experiences of God's abundant generosity that Ignatius had.

If you would like to learn more about this program, the parish will offer an information session in September. Consult the parish web site and the parish bulletin for more information about this session.

You know there is a lot of power in prayer. Many of our parishioners

have already experienced the programs of the Ignatian Spirituality. Just imagine what might happen if we could get this whole parish praying together. Why not try it?