

# **DAY 4**

## **I - DISPROPORTION**

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As we have done these past days, we again *listen to Him, my beloved Son*. Earlier in the retreat, facing the crucified Lord, we asked ourselves: *what response should I make to Christ?* That question remains alive in us. Yet, even as our desire to respond in the best manner grows, we seem to be held back by a nagging doubt: *what do I have in me to offer to the Lord?*

There is in us a keen awareness of disproportion, indeed a twofold disproportion. A disproportion in the first place between the much I have freely received from the Lord and the little I seem to have in me to offer back... as if Christ **needed** anything from me. But then we remember that *what you did for one of these little ones you did for me* [Mt. 25: 40]. Still we recognize a second disproportion between the many needs surrounding us and what we can offer to help, not taking prayerfully into account what the Lord is capable of doing with my offering. When I was still teaching, yes, there had to be a proportion between my class preparation, my knowledge, my ability to put it across, and what the students could profit from it. But such proportion does not apply in our response to the Lord.

It will be helpful for us to consider now one of the Lord's **deeds** and to *listen* to the message conveyed in that deed. In the gospels we have several parallel narratives of the feeding of a multitude with a clearly disproportionate amount of food, the only miracle reported in all four gospels –in fact Mark presents us twice with such event. The passage is appropriate for an “imaginative contemplation” entering the scene, becoming part of the event. You may read Mt. 14: 13-21 at the end of this section's pages.

Really, what are five loaves and two fish for a multitude of more than five thousand? Indeed, an enormous disproportion. But Jesus is not asking the disciples to satisfy the crowd's hunger, just to bring to him what they have at hand. He will do the satisfying of their hunger and there will even be a surplus, a clear sign of the overflowing capability of Jesus.

The Lord's remark *what you did for one of these little ones you did for me* brings us away from that deserted place to our here and now, as we desire to respond by sharing in the Lord's mission. There are so many hungers surrounding us, one of which is physical hunger, and there is only so much we can contribute to alleviate them. Physical hunger is real. Yet in a way it is an easier one to alleviate by giving of what we **have**. But there are many other hungers around us: hunger for respect, for compassion, the hunger to be listened to in this woefully impersonal world of ours. And this not only in the world at large, but even in our small world and even in family living.

No, we cannot quench their hungers or slake their thirsts by ourselves, but we can make available to the Lord the five loaves and two fish we have. It is not so much a matter of giving of what we have, as a matter of giving of what we **are**. We are all gifted with skills, talents, time... and we can place that at the Lord's disposal. Yes, there will always be disproportion between the little, or even the much, we can contribute and what the Lord can do with that. But we cannot use the disproportion as an excuse or a red herring, hoping it will leave us “off the hook”.

## REFERENCE SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

### DISPROPORTION

**Mt. 14: 13-21** When Jesus heard of it, he withdrew in a boat to a deserted place by himself. The crowds heard of this and followed him on foot from their towns. When he disembarked and saw the vast crowd, his heart was moved with pity for them, and he cured their sick. When it was evening, the disciples approached him and said, “This is a deserted place and it is already late; dismiss the crowds so that they can go to the villages and buy food for themselves.” [Jesus] said to them, “There is no need for them to go away; give them some food yourselves.” But they said to him, “Five loaves and two fish are all we have here.” Then he said, “Bring them here to me,” and he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, he said the blessing, broke the loaves, and gave them to the disciples, who in turn gave them to the crowds. They all ate and were satisfied, and they picked up the fragments left over –twelve wicker baskets full. Those who ate were about five thousand men, not counting women and children.