

**Gospel Reflection on John 6:1-15**  
**17<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time Year B – 26<sup>th</sup> July 15'**

Have you ever been asked a question and answered it with great certainty or confidence at the time only to discover somewhere down the track how shallow, flawed or narrow your answer may have been? Questions are powerful tools that can help us ponder things more deeply and more creatively. If it is a powerful or perhaps a challenging or confronting question we often never forget it. And only in time might we come to a depth of understanding that goes way beyond our initial response. Questions are critically important for us as they can break us open to a deeper truth and reality. John Dear wrote a book called *The Questions of Jesus* and Richard Rohr wrote the Forward. In the Forward he stated that *Jesus asked 183 questions in the four Gospels and he only directly answered three of them*. Questions are critically important for everyone. Jesus asked them and so must we.

Jesus asks Philip in today's Gospel: *Where can we buy some bread for these people to eat?* We are told that Jesus only asked this question to *test* Philip. What is this *test*? It seems that Jesus wanted this question to penetrate deeply into Philip's consciousness. Perhaps the *test* is for Philip to stay open to this profound question for the remainder of his life – it is an ongoing question that would never have a definitive answer because the answer was ever deepening within him. But surely Philip would have looked back on this encounter with Jesus and seen how shallow and limiting his answer was and just how little he was aware of who Jesus was or who in fact he was himself.

Every one of us has an extraordinary capacity within us for creativity – for creating. Yet too often all we see or allow ourselves to experience is what we see directly before us as Philip did in our Gospel. The Mystery Living within us and longing to emerge draws us into the creativity within us and there we will discover an abundance that we never knew existed. But to experience this we must be able to break free from the restraints of the narrow perspective we can hold of our surroundings and inner world so as to dare to imagine and dream endless possibilities. How powerfully Jesus reveals this.

Jesus creates something seemingly out of very little and what emerges is an abundance of nourishment for everyone with far more left over than they began with. Every action and encounter that Jesus enters into reveals to us what is present and possible within *us*. How uncomfortable we can feel when we hear this. How much easier it is for us to put Jesus up on a pedestal and want to *cling* to him and make him *king* than it is for us to open into the truth of the abundance of our own collective creativity and then live out of that abundance for the good and wellbeing of everyone. *Jesus, who could see they were about to come and take him by force and make him king, escaped back to the hills by himself*. Up until this point Jesus has given himself freely to *teach* the people, but now we see him *escaping* from them because they want to *cling* to him. They have not understood.

This is so important for us to hear and understand. Jesus told Mary Magdalene in the early resurrection experiences: *do not cling to me*. When we attempt to *cling* to Jesus in this way then we too lose Jesus. It is not about making Jesus *king* – it is about coming to terms with the Christ Presence alive in the heart of the whole of creation which of course includes each of us. What Jesus longs to *teach us* is that this Christ Presence is not external to us but present in every fibre of our being – there is nothing external to *cling* to because it is present within us and within everything.

Everything we hunger for is already given to us and is within us and everything around us continually feeds that hunger when we are open to breathe in its life – there is nothing to *cling* to because it is already present and waiting to be creatively explored. We seem to get caught into the thinking that we have so little when in fact we have so much - but we must consciously open into those depthless depths within us. We must learn to become great explorers not just of our external world but also of our internal world. Shaun McNiff in his book *Trust the Process* says that *Pablo Picasso when asked*

*to define what is a work of art was reported to have replied, "What is not?" How wonderful it would be if we were asked to define what Christ is and we all could reply, What is not? Then we would have understood something of what Jesus so desperately wanted to teach us. It is from this point where true exploration commences - where creativity and imagination set us upon an extraordinary journey - where great and simple questions can be explored - where true abundance can be experienced - and where we learn who we truly are. Shaun McNiff says: Sit with what you already have, and dream with it in a new way. Jesus instructs us to then pick up the pieces left over, so that nothing gets wasted. Are we going to pick up the pieces or waste the invitation?*

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