

32nd Sunday in Ordinary Time

James Vann Johnston is now the bishop of the Diocese of Kansas City-St. Joseph. For many months we have been praying for a new shepherd, and now we give thanks that he has arrived. During the same months, Archbishop Joseph Naumann has served as the apostolic administrator appointed by Pope Francis. Archbishop Naumann already had a full time job in charge of the Archdiocese of Kansas City in Kansas. When he received a call from the Vatican asking him to add onto his responsibilities the temporary leadership of our diocese, his first thought was, “Don’t you think I have enough to do already?” But then he thought about all the times he had asked a priest in his diocese to take on some extra responsibility, and the priest generously agreed. He accepted this request in the same spirit. I don’t know how Archbishop Naumann juggled two jobs at once, but he did it, and he helped our diocese bridge the gap between two bishops. For the past few months, we have been praying for him as “Joseph” during the Eucharistic Prayer of every mass. Now we will switch to “James”.

When a friend of mine was expecting her third child, she was nervous about the additional responsibility. I introduced her to my niece, who has four children. Julie reassured her: “You have nothing to worry about. You used to put two jackets on kids before going outside, now you put three on. It isn’t that much more. You can do this.” I don’t know how parents find the time, the patience and the love to add another child to their family, but they do. They sometimes fear that they won’t have enough of what they need, but somehow they make it work.

In today’s first reading Elijah the prophet is traveling, and he’s thirsty. He sees a stranger gathering sticks. The woman is not a Jew, so she could ignore him. She is a widow; she has no source of income. There is a drought, so it was hard to procure water, grain and oil. She has a son. Both of them are starving to death. She has only enough food to prepare one final meal for themselves by heating flour and oil. A biscuit will be their last supper. After this meal, they will die. Elijah is thirsty, so he asks for a small cup of water. She can handle this. But as she turns to get it, Elijah asks also for food. Now, this is too much. There really isn’t enough food for him. Elijah wants the last supper she is preparing for herself and her son. He says that God will reward her with enough grain and oil to last until the drought ends and the rains return. He is asking her not only for her charity; he is asking for her faith. She agrees. After the meal, Elijah stays with her, and indeed, her grain and oil miraculously multiply. She has enough for a full year to feed all three of them, all because she was generous when she thought she had nothing left, and because she put her trust in God.

My brothers and sisters, there are many times when we feel as though we have nothing to give. We already have a full-time job, and we can’t take on more work. We already have mouths to feed, and there isn’t enough to share. We are busy, and we have no time to volunteer. We have little faith, and we cannot trust in God. But usually, when we share, we discover something miraculous. We do have more than we thought. When we give, we receive back whatever we gave away, and we also receive an increase of faith.

Sunday, November 8, 2015