

“All we have with us is five loaves and two fish”

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When I first went to be a priest at the age of sixteen, we still had the boarding school system. That is I lived in school during term time. Obviously there were deprivations as a result, but there were also clear advantages. One of which was sport. Never having any great eye ball coordination, and coming from a family of talented soccer players my confidence was low. However I was included in the house cricket team because the numbers in the year were also low. My chance to play in a full cricket match came, and I was rubbish. In to bat came a lad a year younger than me, who is now the headmaster of a local catholic senior school. He was talented in all things and knocked the ball past me within a short space of time. My effort was criticised, and I was annoyed. Thus when he knocked the ball over my head, it was with my wounded pride, and not talent, that I leap into the air like a salmon to a fly, and caught the thing. Well maybe not so elegantly, but I caught it anyway. Now, watching England play the West Indies, I think of that moment. Indeed the older I get the better that was.

I did not have much talent. I never had much sporting talent. But on occasion I have been able to use whatever talent I have, and miraculous things have happened.

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Enough is as good as a feast. Enjoy the feast

Holding the baby in your arms can be both beautiful and terrifying. This is your son. This is your daughter. This is the greatest responsibility that you have ever experienced. The birth of the child does not come with an instruction book. However from you will come the food and clothing. From you will come the atmosphere of the home in which this creature will learn self-respect, justice, love. From you will be expected leadership, sacrifice, and celebration. From you will come the courage to deal with the uncertainty of tomorrow, while the child matures in the security of today.

Not so many years from this point you were a child yourself. (Even though this first birth was when you were thirty two) If you think you are in control, you are a fool. But the love you have. The example of your own parents. The gifts that God has given you. These will mean that if you use those talents to the best of your ability's miracles will happen.

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I know of a child with special needs who lives without clear speech. Who has a special way of life determined not by what he has, but by what he has not. He was born into a successful and financially wealthy family. He is very hard work. One of his carers is retired, and thus able to help. This individual in his working life was quite used to telling people what to do, and expecting the appropriate response. You cannot tell this child what to do. You rarely get a coherent response. However on one beautiful occasion this carer with a background in management trapped the child's finger in the lock of his specialist chair. He realised panicked, kissed the child, hugged the child. Said he was sorry, said he was sorry. Took him in his arms, then put the boy beside his favourite toys on the living room floor.

The limited voice of this child is articulated in one or two expressions of sign language. From his place on the floor he looked up, at this worldly successful guardian, and spoke to him at an almost sacred level. He considered one who loved him. He pointed to himself then put his two hands together.

“My friend”

He said.

“My friend.”

Little in the adult’s whole life had spoken more profoundly to him, and taught so much about what matters.

I doubt this child even had five loaves and two fish
Even so. Enough is as good as a feast. Enjoy the feast
Miracles do happen.

We are encouraged by the secular world always to want more.
It is true that there is nothing more disgraceful than hunger, in this generous world.

That should never be romanticised, or ignored
However when there is enough, it is amazing what you can create
With just five loaves and two fish.

Five loaves and two fish
Enough is as good as a feast
Enjoy the feast.

