

18th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Cycle A-2026

This past week, I was really into the music of James Taylor. Today's Gospel reading brought to mind his popular hit "Shower the People" in which he sings: "Shower the people you love with love show them the way you feel." That's exactly what Jesus does with the crowd by showering them with a superabundance of bread and fish, so much so, there were twelve wicker baskets full of leftovers. In this context, the number twelve symbolizes the fullness of God's providence. God's providence can be defined as the "active care, guidance, and governance by which God directs all things in the universe toward His wise and good purposes. This reveals the world is "lovingly sustained and managed by God" while taking into account the reality of human free will. God's providence works in, through and around our good, bad, and less desirable choices.

There are two expressions of God's providence. The first is general providence. This involves God's ongoing care of the universe through the laws of nature and providing basic needs such as rain, sun, and food. The second is special providence. This involves the ordinary and extraordinary ways God is present and active in our lives and in specific situations. We are all personal recipients of God's special providence if only we have the spiritual eyes to see, the spiritual ears to hear, and the spiritual heart to understand and respond in a spirit of gratitude. God's special providence for us is all embracing. He genuinely cares about our physical well-being, our mental and emotional health, the quality of our relationships, and the spiritual state of our eternal souls.

Even though His providence works within our lives and souls through the guidance and inspiration of the Holy Spirit, there is another dimension to His daily care. The other aspect is this, we are part of God's providence for other people, and other people are part of God's providence for us. For example, we are part of God's providence in the life of another person whenever we:

visit the sick and suffering; lend a helping hand in a time of genuine need; offer words of comfort, encouragement, and hope; and speak the truth of the Gospel and our Catholic Christian in love. The same is true whenever we are on the receiving end of this charity. The special providence of God is motivated by His love and compassion whether it be our experiences of spiritual hunger and thirst, personal suffering, physical illness, or material need.

Another song by James Taylor that really touched my heart this week is called “Handyman.” In the song he sings: “I’m not the kind to use a pencil or ruler. I’m handy with love and I’m no fool. I fix broken hearts I know that I truly can. If your broken heart should need repair, then I am the man to see. Later on in the song he sings: “Here is the main thing that I want to say, I’m busy 24 hours a day. I fix broken hearts. I know that I truly can.”

Connecting these lyrics with God, the type of special providence that Jesus Christ desires to provide us with the most, is to fix our broken hearts. He is busy 24 hours a day seeking to heal our broken hearts weighed

down by the burden of our sins. He does this by inspiring us to seek out and trust in His mercy, and to continually draw near to Him and His will. He is busy 24 hours a day seeking to heal our broken hearts weighed down by the burden of relational struggles and difficulties. He does this by giving us the desire and the capacity to strengthen our personal relationships and address the underlying issues. If necessary, He will inspire us to forgive ourselves and the other person. Forgiveness is always a central component of allowing Jesus to fix our broken hearts. He is busy 24 hours a day seeking to heal our broken hearts weighed down by illness, loss, and the anxieties of life. He does this by giving us a spirit of hope, fueled by faith, that brings us inner peace and provides us with a big picture perspective.

What are the ways that we need Jesus to fix and repair our broken hearts? May we keep placing our hearts into the more than capable hands of Jesus Christ. Better yet, may we place them within His Sacred Heart of Jesus which forever burns with infinite love, grace, mercy, and compassion, for us. Our broken hearts are

ultimately healed by the generosity and goodness of Jesus Christ who loves us so much, there are twelve wicker baskets of His love left over for each of us.

Sometimes we are able to immediately recognize the special providence of God in our lives. In those moments, hopefully our hearts are filled with a spirit of awe and wonder permeated by a spirit of gratitude. May these experiences renew and deepen our faith, hope, love, and trust in God. Other times, we are only able to recognize the special providence of God through the gift of inspired hindsight. We finally see how God was actively loving, caring for, and protecting us. He was doing so through a particular person, group of people, or series of events, whether pleasant or unpleasant.

May we come to a renewed faith and trust in the special providence of God. May we celebrate all the ways that He loves and takes care of us, especially through His unwavering commitment to heal our broken hearts. Jesus Christ is our ultimate “Handyman.” Let’s keep giving him the opportunity to repair and fix our hearts. HE knows that HE really can.

May we be willing to take the leap of faith so that we can discover this exciting reality for ourselves.