**Youth Altar Server Opening Prayer & Reflection**

**Gathering Song:** “Christ, Be Our Light” (Farrell, OCP)

“Servant Song” (McGargill, OCP)

“The Servant Song” (Gillard, Universal-Brentwood)

**Sign of the Cross**

**Call to Prayer**

Leader: Lord our God, you sent your Son Jesus as a perfect example of your love for us. As we learn about serving at your altar, we ask that we may always be grateful for his sacrifice on the cross, and that all people may seek him their lives. Amen.

**Reading John 6:1-15**

(Taken from the *Lectionary for Mass with Children)*

A reading from the holy gospel according to John.

Jesus crossed Lake Galilee, which was also known as Lake Tiberias. A larger crowd had seen him work miracles to heal the sick, and those people went with him It was almost time for the Jewish festival of Passover, and Jesus went up on a mountain with his disciples and sat down.

When Jesus saw the large crowd coming toward him, he asked Philip, “Where will we get enough food to feed all these people?” He said this to test Philip since he already knew what he was going to do.

Philip answered, “Don’t you know that it would take almost a year’s wages just to buy only a little bread for each of these people?”

Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, was one of the disciples. He spoke up and said, “There is a boy here who has five small loaves of barley bread and two fish. But what good is that with all these people?”

The ground was covered with grass, and Jesus told the disciples to have everyone sit down. About five thousand men were in the crowd.

Jesus took the bread in his hands and gave thanks to God. Then he passed the bread to the people, and he did the same with the fish, until everyone had plenty to eat. The people ate all they wanted, and Jesus told his disciples to gather up the leftovers, so that nothing would be wasted. The disciples gathered them up and filled twelve large baskets with what was left over from the five barley loaves. After the people had seen Jesus work this miracle, they began saying, “This must be the Prophet who is to come into the world!” Jesus realized that they would try to force him to be their king. So he went up on a mountain, where he could be alone.

The gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.**

**Interactive Reflection:**

How many have you heard this gospel reading before? *[hopefully, some have]*

You’ve probably heard this story before because it is read on one Sunday every year and is the only miracle mentioned in all four gospels. Can anyone name all four Gospels? *[Matthew, Mark, Luke, John]*

The version of this story we have just heard comes from the gospel of John, and there is something unique about his version. First of all, let me ask, what great miracle does Jesus perform in this reading? *[Feeding over 5,000 people]*

What does Jesus feed them with? *[Five loaves and two fish]*

Where do the five loaves and two fish come from? *[a little boy brings them]*

While this story is familiar and the miracle that Jesus performs is amazing, I want to focus on that boy in the reading. John’s gospel is the only one that mentions this boy, and we really don’t know much, if anything, about him except that he brought and offered five loaves of bread and two fish. He just hides in the background until he senses that he is needed and offers what he has, although it seems far too little to feed such an enormous amount of people. In a sense, that boy is serving Jesus and brings him what he needs when he needs it. Although it seems like the boy plays a small role, Jesus takes his service and his offering and multiplies it so that many people are fed and nourished. The same is true for all of you as you become altar servers.

By becoming an altar server, you are serving Jesus and bringing what you have to the altar so that the Lord can multiply it so that everyone who comes to church can be fed and nourished with the Bread of Life—the Body of Christ. While you are not bringing bread and fish to Mass, you are bringing yourselves in service to God at the altar, and through offering your time, your focus, and your reverence, you are helping everyone in church to pray better and be nourished by God. Even though you may be young, you bring a great deal to the celebration and sacrifice of the Mass.

Before we continue, let me ask:

Why do you want to be an altar server?

Have you watched other altar servers at Mass? Have you noticed anyone who serves really well? How can you tell? What makes them a good altar server?

Bishop Bambera, who is the head bishop of our diocese and a successor to the Apostles, has asked everyone in our diocese to be a servant leader. What do you think that means?  *[If they cannot answer, ask them to define the words individually and then put the definitions together].*

It means that we are supposed to be servants who lead. By serving at Mass, we are helping to lead others, and this is done through our faith in Jesus.

Now, who can tell me what it means to be humble? *[not proud or arrogant, modest etc.]*

Being humble is the key to being a servant leader just like Jesus was, and it is also the key to being a great altar server. Always remember those words, *servant leader* and *humble*, when you are serving at Mass.

**The Lord’s Prayer**

Leader: Let us pray together in the words that Jesus taught us:

**ALL: Our Father…**

**Concluding Prayer:**

Leader: Lord God, you feed and nurture us with the Body and Blood of your Son. May the service we do here help all those who come together in prayer. May we be servant leaders through our ministry as altar servers, our participation at Mass, and how we live outside of these church doors. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

**ALL: Amen.**