I. Introduction

A woman named Bonnie had little experience of family love and support when she was growing up; she had also received no training in religion. Years later, as a single mother of two young children, there were no relatives or friends to assist her, no job, and no income, other than a bit of state aid in the form of rent assistance and food stamps every other week. Even with this help, it was always hard to keep food on the table. During this difficult time, Bonnie somehow became aware of God. She wanted to pray, but didn’t know how, and she didn’t have anyone to ask for advice. One Sunday night she looked at her almost-bare refrigerator and empty kitchen cupboards with great concern: how would she feed her children this week, until the food stamps arrived the following Monday? She had no family to turn to, no kind and friendly neighbors to borrow from, no local food bank—just herself and her quickly-emptying refrigerator.

Normally something always seemed to turn up, but not this week. When it was time for lunch on Tuesday, Bonnie was completely out of food. Hoping to find something—anything—she had overlooked, she checked every cupboard, every drawer, everywhere she could think of in the tiny apartment, while trying to remain calm—but there was absolutely no food to be found. Her children were crying from hunger, and Bonnie had no one to rely on for help—no one but God. She took a deep breath, and prayed silently, simply saying, “God, the children need food.” Bonnie then felt an immediate urge to look in the cupboards again, but she resisted—she had just checked there, and found only bare shelves. Even so, something told her to look again, and when she did, she discovered a box of macaroni and cheese—which she knew hadn’t been there five minutes earlier. She quickly cooked the contents, and she and her children ate until they were satisfied. After lunch the pan still seemed full of macaroni, so she put the leftovers into the refrigerator, planning to warm them up for supper. The same thing happened that evening—after the family ate until they were full, there was still plenty of macaroni left—and it remained that way for the entire week, until Bonnie was able to buy food again. As she later said, “I think my faith then—and now—is like a child’s, in that I just take what is provided at face value. I had told God my problems, and I left the outcome to Him.” For someone who had no religious upbringing, this was a very mature approach to take—one which surely pleased the Lord. God wants to help us in all our needs; all He asks for is our trust.

II. Development

St. Paul assures us in the 2nd Reading that nothing can separate us from Christ’s love, and one of the things he specifically mentions is famine, or a lack of food. God provides for our needs, and is happy to do so, as the prophet Isaiah asserts in the 1st Reading; there are indeed no limits to the Lord’s generosity. Even when Jesus wanted to be alone to spend time grieving over the death of His cousin John the Baptist, He was aware of the needs of the vast crowd that followed Him, and He would not abandon or ignore them;
He healed their sick and miraculously multiplied the little bit of food that was available, so that everyone was able to eat and be satisfied. This would not have happened, of course, if the apostles had refused to share their loaves and fish, or if they and the crowd had been unwilling to obey and cooperate with the Lord because the situation looked hopeless. They didn’t know what Jesus was planning, but they did as He said—and their trust was rewarded in a way they never would have expected.

III. Conclusion

A young boy wanted to climb an old apple tree in the back yard, but he was a little afraid, so his father agreed to watch and make sure he was all right. As it happened, some of the branches were rotten and started to crack under the boy’s weight, so the father called out to his son, telling him to jump into his arms. The boy did so without hesitation, and so his little adventure had a happy ending. Thinking about this later, the father was immensely pleased that his son trusted him to save him and to jump into his arms, and then he realized God expected the same thing from him—but he hadn’t been showing as much faith as his son. The man resolved to change this, and as a result, his faith grew stronger and God’s grace was more active in his life, bringing him greater joy and peace (Knight’s Master Book of 4000 Illustrations, p. 702).

How deep is our faith? If we were in the fourth floor of a burning building, and the only way to escape was to jump from the window into the safety net being held by firefighters forty feet below, we might hesitate for a moment—but as we felt the flames drawing closer, we would jump, and the rescuers would catch us. Can we show at least a similar degree of trust in God? Yes, it’s true the Lord doesn’t always answer our prayers as soon as and in the way we might prefer—but He does answer. When Bonnie prayed for food for her children, she didn’t miraculously find in her refrigerator the ingredients for a sumptuous five-course meal; she merely found a box of macaroni and cheese in her previously-empty cupboard. However, it was just enough for her and her children, and she was grateful—even after eating the same meal over and over, three times a day, for the next five days.

Gratitude and trust make all the difference; we might say they “turbo-charge” our relationship with God. Along with them goes generosity; when the Lord provides for us, He asks that we in turn share with those in need. In fact, there are various alleged private revelations or messages given to contemporary prophets or visionaries promising that if and when a famine or shortage of food comes to our nation, the Lord will once again miraculously multiply our food—if we in turn share with those around us. God is able to work miracles every moment of every day, but He wants us to be involved in this process. Our part is very simple: first, we must trust in Him, no matter how difficult the circumstances appear to be; second, we are to be grateful for everything we receive from Him, even if it’s not exactly what we were hoping for or expecting; and third, we must freely share with others in need, avoiding the temptation to be worried or stingy or selfish. These three steps are how we give permission to the Lord of Miracles to be fully at work in our lives—and Jesus assures us that if we do indeed surrender ourselves into His hands, we will not be abandoned or forgotten, and we will not be disappointed.