

Scripture Study

Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time – Cycle B



Opening prayer

2 Kings 4:42-44

(Psalm 145:10-11, 15-18)

Ephesians 4:1-6

John 6:1-15

Overview of the Gospel:

- The Gospel Readings for the next five weeks have shifted from the Gospel of Mark to the Gospel of John—specifically John 6, the Bread of Life discourse, which in turn leads to Jesus' great teaching on the Eucharist.
- The multiplication of the loaves is the fourth of the seven great "signs" recounted in John's gospel and one of only two that involve food (see John 2:1-11). It is the only miracle that is recounted in all four gospel accounts. They are called signs in John's gospel rather than miracles because they point to profound realities that transcend their original limited purposes.
- In multiplying the loaves, Jesus recalls a similar miracle performed by the great Old Testament prophet Elisha that we hear about in our first reading (2 Kings 4:42-44). Jesus' miracle, however, is much greater, befitting his greater status as Messiah and God. Whereas Elisha starts with twenty loaves, Jesus starts with only five; Elisha feeds one hundred men, while Jesus feeds "about five thousand;" Elisha has "some bread" left over, while Jesus' multiplication produces twelve wicker baskets full of leftovers (representing the twelve tribes of Israel).
- Last week, Mark tells us that Jesus had just finished teaching the crowds "many things" (Mark 6:30-34). He has just fed them with the word of God and with physical food—now he will prepare them to be fed with the Bread of Life.

Questions:

- Who was "the Prophet" that the people thought Jesus might be (verse 14; Deuteronomy 18:15-19)? Who else did they identify with this figure (John 1:21)? Which one of them was it?
- The miracle in today's gospel is the fourth of seven "signs" recorded in John's gospel. Of what were the signs an indicator or proof (CCC 547-49)? What are the most obvious signs of God's presence in the world for you?
- Why are the crowds following Jesus at this point (verse 2)? What makes a disciple genuine (Mark 8:34-38)? Do you only petition Jesus for material things? Have you ever asked him to change your heart or to help you fulfill his will in your life?
- Why do you think the signs of the Eucharist are bread and wine (Matthew 26:23-26; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26; John 2:1-11, 6:1-15)? Do you try to find an explanation for supernatural things? Do you feel you have to have scientific proof in order to believe that Jesus is truly present in the Eucharist?
- In the 2nd reading, St. Paul speaks eloquently about Christian unity and love among the brethren. How is the Eucharist the ultimate sign and reality of unity as Christ intended it?

Catechism of the Catholic Church: §§ 1338, 547-549, 439

Closing prayer

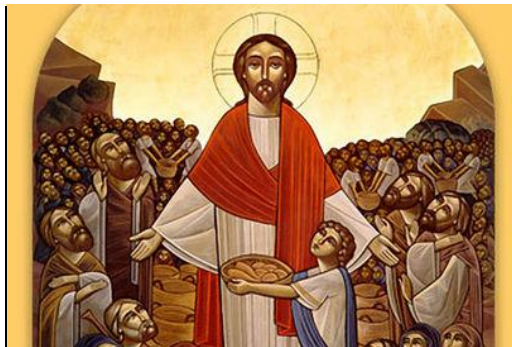
There He is: King of kings and Lord of lords, hidden in the bread. To this extreme He humbled Himself for love of you. –St. Josemaria Escriva

Remember to read and meditate on the daily Mass readings!

"They saw the signs which Jesus did"

Scripture: *John 6:1-15*

Meditation: Can anything on this earth truly satisfy the deepest longing and hunger we experience for God? A great multitude had gathered to hear Jesus, no doubt because they were hungry for the word of life. Jesus' disciples wanted to send them away at the end of the day because they did not have the resources to feed them. They even complained how much money it would take to feed such a crowd – at least six month's wages! Jesus, the *Bread of Life*, took the little they had – five loaves and two fish – and giving thanks to his heavenly Father, distributed to all until they were satisfied of their hunger. The people of Israel had been waiting for the prophet whom Moses had promised: *The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brethren – him shall you heed* (Deuteronomy 18:15). The signs which Jesus did, including the miraculous feeding of the five thousand signified that God has indeed sent him as anointed Prophet and King. Jesus' feeding of the five thousand is the only miracle recorded in all four gospels. What is the significance of this miracle? The miraculous feeding of such a great multitude pointed to God's provision of manna in the wilderness for the people of Israel under Moses' leadership.



This food foreshadowed the true heavenly bread which Jesus would offer his followers.

Jesus makes a claim which only God can make: He is the *true bread of heaven* that can satisfy the deepest hunger we experience. The sign of the multiplication of the loaves when the Lord says the blessing, breaks, and distributes through his disciples prefigures the superabundance of the unique bread of his Eucharist or Lord's Supper. When we receive from the Lord's table we unite ourselves to Jesus Christ, who makes us sharers in his body and blood. Ignatius of Antioch (35-107 A.D.) calls it the "one bread that provides the medicine of immortality, the antidote for death, and the food that makes us live forever in Jesus Christ" (*Ad Eph. 20,2*). This supernatural food is healing for both body and soul and strength for our journey heavenward. When you approach the Table of the Lord, what do you expect to receive? Healing, pardon, comfort, and rest for your soul? The Lord has

much more for us, more than we can ask or imagine. The principal fruit of receiving the Eucharist is an intimate union with Christ. As bodily nourishment restores lost strength, so the Eucharist strengthens us in charity and enables us to break with disordered attachments to creatures and to be more firmly rooted in the love of Christ. Do you hunger for the "bread of life"?

The feeding of the five thousand shows the remarkable generosity of God and his great kindness towards us. When God gives, he gives abundantly. He gives more than we need for ourselves so that we may have something to share with others, especially those who lack what they need. God takes the little we have and multiplies it for the good of others. Do you trust in God's provision for you and do you share freely with others, especially those who are in need?

"Lord Jesus, you satisfy the deepest longing of our heart and you feed us with the finest of wheat (Psalm 81:16). Fill me with gratitude and give me a generous heart that I may freely share with others what you have given to me."

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