

June 19, 2022 Dcn. Jerry Homily

The 'Feeding of the Five Thousand' appears in all four Gospels. It is a type of the Mass. Christ uses the multiplication of bread to provide a super abundant meal. Twelve baskets of bread left over. Just as there was a great deal of wine at the Wedding Feast of Cana. The Eucharist is a superabundant meal in which the accident of bread and wine becomes the substance of Christ's body and blood and if we truly accept then we receive more grace than we can comprehend.

This Eucharistic gift is beyond comprehension; it is a mystery. Would it help if we imagined that we were one of the Disciples who witnessed this miracle? In today's Gospel, Luke places the feeding of the five thousand immediately after the Apostles return from their first missionary journey.

Jesus gave them power to perform miracles, to exorcize demons and to proclaim the Kingdom. Would you be joy-filled if you were able to accomplish good in ways that you never thought you could accomplish? He accomplished it, not you. You go to Bethsaida. You are going to have some time alone with Jesus, time to reflect and talk about what is going on.

But that was not to be, wherever Jesus was; the curious and the needy, those who needed healing and those who just wanted to listen to his message, this large crowd followed. The need to minister overwhelmed any chance for personal time and reflection.

It is interesting to speculate as to what the Disciples were thinking when they told Jesus to send the crowds away. Were they tired and used the lack of food as an excuse? Were they generally concerned about the lack of food in the area, that the people would go hungry? If they were like me, there was probably some concern for others mixed with self-interest.

Then everything changes. Jesus asks them, or is He commanding them? "Give them some food yourselves." These Apostles who had just been healing and exorcizing demons on their missionary journey revert to their, and our, understanding. How are we going to pay for it? How are you going to pay for it? Jesus told them not to bring a walking stick or food or money on this first missionary journey. They went out in faith and traveled and preached and cured and healed. They did this all in the name of Jesus. They had no resources other than the name of Jesus.

But they did not get it. Do we get it? When Jesus provides us with an abundance of grace, when Jesus provides us with everything, when we face a problem do we turn to our old ways? When given the opportunity to serve the Lord, do we raise the question as to how to pay for it? Do we make excuses? I will do this when I have more time, more money, when I retire, etc. etc. etc.

In one sense we are smarter than the Disciples. We have the Resurrection. We have the Sacraments and we have the Church which survived and thrived for 2000 years. We should have a better understanding of what Christ is capable of and what he expects of us. But do we? It would sure be nice to see a miracle.

When the Second Person of the Trinity was incarnated, when Jesus became one of us, God was offering us the opportunity to be lifted up, to become adopted children of the Father.

God gave us this great gift of the Eucharist. This is really the body and blood of Jesus! He is always God and Jesus is fully God and man. Sometimes we bring God down to

our level. We can do this in either of two ways. If we overemphasize the humanity of Jesus, if we see the Eucharist as a symbol rather than as Christ then we become superficial and shallow. On the other hand if we become overly scrupulous, caught up in superficial piety, we risk missing the communal aspect of the Eucharist. Christ came for all of us and he wants us to share His love.

The Apostles, despite their first mission trip, their miracles and success answered the command of "You feed them" with the response we need money. How often do we bargain with God, try to bend His nature to our will? Forget His power?

Today we celebrate the Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ or Corpus Christi. In some ways this feast is a particular challenge to fathers. Today we also celebrate Father's Day. Fathers have a duty to spiritually feed our flock, our family. God has commanded us to feed this flock of ours. Do we say we do have the resources?

Younger children may seem easy. Prayer and the Sacraments provide a strong foundation. But we need to live a life of faith. We need to live by example; by joy, trust, faith, temperance and most of all, love. Many of us with adult children are confused, and even broken-hearted, that our children have not followed the faith and we do not know how to feed them. We may recognize that we do not have the material resources to feed their spirit.

The younger our child is the more likely we will be gratified by their immediate and often spontaneous response to spiritual food. But with adults who do not practice their faith, we are like the Disciples with five barley loaves and two fish to feed thousands. We need to follow His commands to distribute His spiritual food, His grace. We may recognize that we have inadequate resources, that is true. We need to be fed by Him to feed.

When we come up to receive the Eucharist do we ask God for the grace, the spiritual nourishment to do His Will?

If we ask God to feed us in the Eucharist in order that we may do His Will, when we go out we will be like the Disciples in today's Gospel. Okay Lord, five barley loaves and two fish -- if you say so. We know our love is imperfect. It is inadequate to overcome the lack of faith and the hurt of those who have drifted from God, who have drifted from us. Go ahead anyway. We may feel hurt. We are inadequate but if we begin to distribute the inadequate love that we have, God will multiply our efforts and we can joyfully share the message that God is among us. Jesus is present in this simple meal of bread and wine. He will nourish us if, and only if, we leave here to do His will and not ours. He will nourish us if, and only if, we go forth to spread His love and faith. God bless all of you, especially fathers and future fathers.

~Dcn. Jerry