

Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time
July 29, 2018

Leader: A Reading from the Holy Gospel According to John

(Jn 6: 1 - 15)

ALL: Glory to You, O Lord.

Jesus went across the Sea of Galilee. A large crowd followed him, because they saw the signs he was performing on the sick. Jesus went up on the mountain, and there he sat down with his disciples. The Jewish feast of Passover was near. When Jesus raised his eyes and saw that a large crowd was coming to him, he said to Philip, "Where can we buy enough food for them to eat?" He said this to test him, because he himself knew what he was going to do. Philip answered him, "Two hundred days' wages worth of food would not be enough for each of them to have a little." One of his disciples, Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, said to him, "There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish; but what good are these for so many?" Jesus said, "Have the people recline." Now there was a great deal of grass in that place. So the men reclined, about five thousand in number. Then Jesus took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed them to those who were reclining, and also as much of the fish as they wanted. When they had had their fill, he said to his disciples, "Gather the fragments left over, so that nothing will be wasted." So they collected them, and filled twelve wicker baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves that had been more than they could eat. When the people saw the sign he had done, they said, "This is truly the Prophet, the one who is to come into the world." Since Jesus knew that they were going to come and carry him off to make him king, he withdrew again to the mountain alone.

The Gospel of the Lord.

ALL: Praise to You, Lord Jesus Christ.

Let us pray.

O Lord, You fed Your people with manna in the desert.
You feed Your people with the bread that comes down from Heaven.
You give us our daily bread and You give us the bread of life.
You nourish our bodies and You nourish our souls.
All that is good comes from You.
Thank You, Father for Your loving care.
Thank You for the gift of Your Son. Amen.

Jesus Prepares our Table... *

The multiplication of the loaves is the only miracle described in all four Gospels. This underscores the profound importance of this event to the early Church as prefiguring the gift of Eucharist at the Last Supper and the continuing gift of Eucharist that is at the center of our worship. John's Gospel includes the detail, "*The Jewish feast of Passover was near.*" This detail calls to mind the Last Supper, when Jesus celebrated the Passover with His disciples. Being mindful of Passover, the feast of unleavened bread, also helps us to better appreciate the miraculous multiplication of the loaves by Our Lord and helps set the stage for His bread of life discourse. In each of the synoptic

Gospels, we are told that Jesus *blessed* the bread, *broke* the bread and *gave* the bread, providing striking similarities between this miraculous event and the institution of the Eucharist. This passage from John's Gospel tells us that Jesus *gave thanks and distributed* the bread. The Greek word for giving thanks is *eucharisteo*, the source of the word "Eucharist." Thus, in each of the four Gospels, there is a profoundly ceremonial nature to the miraculous feeding of the multitude. Furthermore, this passage from John's Gospel is the beginning of Chapter 6, which includes the beautiful "bread of life" discourse by Jesus. All of the Gospel narratives recognize the feeding of the multitude as a profoundly important event in the unfolding revelation of Jesus as the true bread that comes down from Heaven.

In many of the key events in the unfolding of the new covenant instituted by Jesus we are reminded of the pivotal theophany on Mount Sinai when God appeared to Moses and delivered the Law. Note that in this passage "*Jesus went up on the mountain.*" Moses ascended the mountain to receive the gift of the Ten Commandments, a sign of the covenant between God and His people. Jesus' ascends the mountain to perform a sign of the new covenant. When Jesus questions Phillip to test his faith, we are reminded of the question Moses asked in the book of Numbers when the Jewish people were hungry in the desert, "*Where am I to get meat to give to all this people?*" The answer is the same in each case: God will provide for His people. Although the crowd doesn't recognize the full significance of what Jesus has done when He performs this powerful sign of God's providence, they correctly proclaim that Jesus is the promised prophet like Moses sent to inaugurate the New Israel. However, they then immediately lapse into the false ideas surrounding the promised Messiah in their resolve to "carry him off to make him king." Jesus responds by withdrawing again to the mountain alone. The fact that Jesus withdrew *alone* may be an indication that His own disciples fostered the same false messianic expectations, and were willing to participate in the misguided intention to make Jesus their earthly king.

It is an interesting insight into the personalities of Phillip and Andrew that they are the disciples who interact with Jesus immediately prior to the multiplication of the loaves. Earlier in John's Gospel it is Phillip who brings Nathaniel to Jesus and it is Andrew who brings his brother Simon Peter to Jesus. Here it is Phillip who is questioned by the Lord regarding how the people will be fed and it is Andrew who points out the boy with the five barley loaves and two fish. Later in John's Gospel, Andrew and Phillip are the disciples who bring the Gentiles to Jesus when they ask to see Him. The role of Andrew and Phillip is to bring others to Jesus. This is the role and duty of all who profess to be disciples of Our Lord.

* See The Collegeville Bible Commentary and The Jerome Biblical Commentary for additional discussion

Questions for a Quiet Moment:

When I reflect on today's Gospel, seeing how Jesus himself gave those who sought Him all that they needed, do I trust that He will provide for me? Do I sense His love for me?

Am I grateful for the gift of Eucharist?

Am I mindful of the need to gather the fragments, so that nothing will be wasted?