

- In the Gospel we just heard...we have Jesus' great miracle of the multiplication of the loaves and fishes for the crowd...probably of around 10,000 or more.
- And just to reiterate once again, this was NOT that Jesus simply convinced people to share what they already had in a sort of desert potluck...
- ...because if the people already *had* food, the apostles wouldn't have been concerned about them having to go to the villages to buy food.
- Plus you have the Middle Eastern tradition of hospitality, in which one was obliged to share what he had anyway.
- And in the Gospels of Mark and John recounting this event, the apostles complain that that it would take more than 8 months wages even to give each person a mouthful.
- And the Gospel records that Jesus told the disciples to give the people food, and they distributed the food that He had blessed... and through His blessing had multiplied.
- The shared “fish sandwich” story was simply imagined by some to bring Jesus down to our level...to “un-divinize” him...trying to negate His divinity and posit that he was just a “good man”... simply teaching nice things rather than the actual Word of God.
- Because if He is simply a good man teaching a pleasant philosophy of life, that eliminates any real obligation for us to hear and obey Him...which is incumbent upon us if He is God—which He is.
- If He's just a nice man, we can follow His teachings...or not.
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- But that is not the case.
- As C.S. Lewis wrote—one thing is unmistakable by the words of Jesus: either he was God, or he was a lunatic.
- Who else would say: *“Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death.”*
- Or: *“I am the bread of life; he who comes to me shall not hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst?”*

- Or especially: “*He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life?*”
- And yet...the Church is built upon the testimony of witnesses who DID see Him heal the sick...DID see Him raise the dead...DID see Him risen from the dead and ascend into Heaven.
- Why else would they have gone to their deaths testifying about Him otherwise?

- Now this multiplication of loaves and fish is one of the greatest—and most symbolic--miracles that Jesus performs—one of the few stories related to us in all four Gospels.
 - People had been coming to him to be healed in body, and now that John the Baptist was dead, it was time for Jesus to show them what He truly offered: spiritual healing and eternal life.
 - He would feed their bodies today...preparing for the time in which He would feed their souls tomorrow...after His death, resurrection and ascension.
 - Then would feed their souls—our souls—with grace in the sacraments—most especially with the Eucharist which this event foreshadows, and which is the source of all the sacraments...all being fed by Jesus so as to become one people in Him.
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 - But even the Eucharist is simply “food for our journey”—to strengthen us in life’s struggle toward the holiness to which God leads us...to feed our souls with grace, to strengthen us in temptation...to lead us to that Promised Land symbolized in the first reading:
 - *All you who are thirsty,
come to the water!
You who have no money,
come, receive grain and eat;
Come, without paying and without cost,
drink wine and milk!*

- To get the scope of the imagery, remember that the recipients of that prophecy lived in a desert land in which most people—the poor—got their food on a daily basis...if at all.
- And so the prophecy assures them...and us now: you will receive not only food in abundance, but the finest of foods. Spiritually, you will receive that fulfillment for which your soul longs so desperately—to know that you are loved absolutely.

- The Gospel story today states: *“Taking the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, he said the blessing, broke the loaves, and gave them to the disciples, who in turn gave them to the crowds.”*
- ...foreshadowing the Last Supper: *“Jesus took bread, and blessed, and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, “Take, eat; this is my body.”* (Mat 26:26-28 RSV)
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- The priest says these words at each Mass—but instead of mere bread filling the physical body, it becomes the Eucharistic Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Christ himself...filling the faithful with the life-giving grace of God.
- Twelve baskets were left over—one for each apostle, the first bishops of the Church—each given the mission to go out and feed the crowd...just as they would later be ordained to go out and feed the world through the Church.

- So: *“All you who are thirsty, DO come to the water...of baptism. You who have no money, DO come, receive grain and eat—to the true bread of life in the Eucharist. Come, without paying and without cost, drink wine and milk.” Drink deeply of God’s grace.*
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- The gift of God is free...but reserved to those who love him and are faithful to his word.
- For the other part of that same reading was:
 - Heed me, and you shall eat well...

- *Come to me heedfully,*
listen, that you may have life.
- Yes...eternal life is offered by a loving Father, but we must truly love Him in return. And how do we do that?
- John tells us in his letter: “*This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments.*”...by following the Word, Jesus Christ—to love God above all, and to love our neighbor as ourselves.
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- At the feeding of the 5000, notice that Jesus did not begin with nothing, but rather He took what the faithful brought to Him...and multiplied that meagre portion to great abundance.
- Likewise, we bring the mustard seed of our faith and fidelity, and He causes the growth into the great tree...watered by His grace.
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- We can leave Christ voluntarily...as Paul said in the 2nd reading... but why, as it says in our first reading “*...spend your money for what is not bread; your wages for what fails to satisfy?...*”
- We see this is so many people...those who make money, power, notoriety and sex their idols...and yet are never satisfied...are never content.
- But for those who are faithful to Him, there is nothing that can separate them from the love of God, from contentment in the knowledge of His love even while we are here on earth...or from the eternal happiness reserved for us in Heaven.

Reading 1
Is 55:1-3

Thus says the LORD:
All you who are thirsty,
come to the water!
You who have no money,
come, receive grain and eat;
Come, without paying and without cost,
drink wine and milk!
Why spend your money for what is not bread;
your wages for what fails to satisfy?
Heed me, and you shall eat well,
you shall delight in rich fare.
Come to me heedfully,
listen, that you may have life.
I will renew with you the everlasting covenant,
the benefits assured to David.

Responsorial Psalm
Ps 145:8-9, 15-16, 17-18

R. (cf. 16) The hand of the Lord feeds us; he answers all our needs.

The LORD is gracious and merciful,
slow to anger and of great kindness.
The LORD is good to all
and compassionate toward all his works.

R. The hand of the Lord feeds us; he answers all our needs.

The eyes of all look hopefully to you,
and you give them their food in due season;
you open your hand
and satisfy the desire of every living thing.

R. The hand of the Lord feeds us; he answers all our needs.

The LORD is just in all his ways
and holy in all his works.
The LORD is near to all who call upon him,
to all who call upon him in truth.

R. The hand of the Lord feeds us; he answers all our needs.

Reading II
Rom 8:35, 37-39

Brothers and sisters:
What will separate us from the love of Christ?
Will anguish, or distress, or persecution, or famine,
or nakedness, or peril, or the sword?

No, in all these things we conquer overwhelmingly
through him who loved us.
For I am convinced that neither death, nor life,
nor angels, nor principalities,
nor present things, nor future things,
nor powers, nor height, nor depth,
nor any other creature will be able to separate us
from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Gospel

Mt 14:13-21

When Jesus heard of the death of John the Baptist,
he withdrew in a boat to a deserted place by himself.
The crowds heard of this and followed him on foot from their towns.
When he disembarked and saw the vast crowd,
his heart was moved with pity for them, and he cured their sick.
When it was evening, the disciples approached him and said,
“This is a deserted place and it is already late;
dismiss the crowds so that they can go to the villages
and buy food for themselves.”
Jesus said to them, “There is no need for them to go away;
give them some food yourselves.”
But they said to him,
“Five loaves and two fish are all we have here.”
Then he said, “Bring them here to me, ”
and he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass.
Taking the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven,
he said the blessing, broke the loaves,
and gave them to the disciples,
who in turn gave them to the crowds.
They all ate and were satisfied,
and they picked up the fragments left over—
twelve wicker baskets full.
Those who ate were about five thousand men,
not counting women and children.