

## **Homily for August 2, 2020**

In a short outline of the Gospel According to Matthew, today's readings are at the beginning of a new section of the gospel. Up through last week, we have been in a three-chapter part of the gospel where the over-all theme of what is going on could be labeled, "The mystery of the Kingdom of Heaven." That word "mystery" is a good way to remember the past few weeks of hearing one parable after another where Our Lord begins by saying, "The Kingdom of Heaven is like..."

With today's readings, we are in a five chapter section that the outline described as, "The Kingdom Becomes the Church." Certainly the Feeding of the Five Thousand is a dramatic breaking-in of God's power and life into His creation.

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It has been noted that (outside of the Resurrection) the Multiplication of the Loaves and Fish is the only miracle of Our Lord that is recorded in all four gospels. The event is significant. Everyone thought it was worth sharing and remembering and pondering. Not only that, but Matthew and Mark also record that there was later a second time Jesus fed thousands with a small number of loaves.

Christ's mission to save us was manifested when He walked the earth by forgiving sins, freeing the possessed, healing the ill, raising the dead, and calming storms - and by feeding the hungry. Something as simple as hunger was not overlooked by Him. Because something as basic as hunger is a cry to God for help. And Christ is the help of God. He is God the helper.

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Right before this, another meal is mentioned. We are told that King Herod held a banquet on his birthday. It was during that gathering Herod made a promise to behead John the Baptist. That gathering was about Herod and what He wanted and what would give Him glory.

When we compare that meal to this one, we see a big difference. What Christ does is see to the needs of the people, for the greater glory of the Father through the Son.

Here, Jesus goes to a deserted place. It would seem He needs some time alone after the death of His cousin. But Our Lord does not get time alone. Crowds found Him. And even in His need, he saw their greater need – a need for Him. And he cured their sick.

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We are told the disciples asked Him to have everyone go home so they could eat. It was the end of the day. The disciples were probably tired. But Jesus knew the people could not receive better food than what He had to give.

He tells the disciples to feed the people. Now each gospel has different details of where they obtained the five loaves and two fish. Here in Matthew, they possess them. They mention the

amount as if to say it is not enough even for themselves. As disciples we are called to use all we have and trust in the unlimited resources of Christ.

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One commentator notices that when Our Lord says, “Bring them here to me” what follows immediately is his ordering the crowds to sit down. It is as if He did not immediately want the disciples to bring Him the food, but the people. As His disciples, we are called to bring the people, to bring the crowds, to Him.

And Jesus has His disciples feed the multitude with the food blessed and broken by Him. We normally use the words “Disciple” and “Apostle” to refer to different groups. Disciples are followers of Christ. Apostles are the Inner Twelve – those who have a special responsibility to Christ to care for the Disciples. Because twelve baskets are filled with the scattered remains, we normally think these “Disciples” were the “Twelve Apostles.” I think that is correct. Yet Matthew’s use of the word “Disciple” reminds us that it is not just the Apostles and their successors - the bishops - who are called to feed the world. It is all of us.

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And then we have the Big Miracle. It is a powerful picture. Everyone ate until they were satisfied. And what was left over, what was not taken home, was so much that twelve men who each have to carry a baskets of food. All of this was from five loaves and two fish – and God.

But there is more. Almost as an afterthought - to drive the point home – we are told how many were fed. The other gospels tell us it was five thousand men. Matthew says more. He says it was, “five thousand men, not including women and children.” We are left asking how many were fed. A little more than five thousand? Were there equal numbers of women as men – ten thousand people? Were there entire families there – as they brought their ill for healing? Were there perhaps twenty-five thousand people?

What Jesus does when we but follow His directions – is overwhelming.

Even today.

Thank you for following Him. Thank you for following His directions. Thank you for being the people through whom others meet Christ, have their needs met, and receive His everlasting nourishment.