

Fr. Rudy's Reflections
The Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time
July 28, 2024

The Bread of Life

My Brothers and Sisters in the Risen Lord,

In today's Gospel, we witness this profound miracle: the remarkable event where Jesus feeds thousands from a few loaves and fish. This moment is rich with symbolism and significance, inviting us to look beyond the literal miracle to the deeper spiritual truth it reveals. The feeding of the multitude is one of the most well-known stories in the Gospels and is recounted in all four accounts. It is not, however, merely a tale of divine provision; it is a foreshadowing of the Last Supper and a precursor to the Eucharist. This miracle, the fourth of John's seven signs of Christ's divinity, highlights Jesus as the source of spiritual nourishment. The physical feeding of the crowd points to a deeper reality: Jesus is the Bread of Life, the sustenance for our souls.

When Jesus takes the loaves, gives thanks, and distributes them, we see that these gestures are a central part of the Mass today and are rich with parallels. The mountaintop where Jesus performs this miracle symbolizes the encounter between God and humanity, as often seen in the Old Testament. As the crowd assembled to be taught by Jesus, so do we gather to listen to the Liturgy of the Word during the first part of Mass. The presentation of gifts during Mass mirrors the offering of the small loaves and fish that God multiplies by transforming them into the Eucharist, the spiritual food that sustains us. This moment echoes the Last Supper, where Jesus, the Lamb of God, offers himself for our salvation. When Jesus says, "Take this, all of you, and eat of it," he is not only addressing those present at the Last Supper but inviting all of us to partake in the divine life he offers. At every Mass, we are invited to receive this Bread of Life, which alone satisfies the deepest hunger of our souls.

After communion, the act of gathering the leftovers echoes the care Jesus took to ensure nothing was wasted. This signifies the abundance of God's grace and the importance of cherishing the spiritual gifts we receive. The miracle of the Eucharist is celebrated at every Mass, continually nourishing and sustaining us on our journey of faith.

The Jewish tradition of God providing for his people is beautifully reflected in this miracle. Yet, Jesus goes further by involving his disciples in the act of gathering. This participation emphasizes that when we share what we have, even from our poverty, God blesses and multiplies it, ensuring that there is enough for all. The miracle of the loaves and fish also teaches us that God never abandons those who act in faith and generosity. By sharing in solidarity, we become instruments of God's providence, experiencing the multiplication of grace in our lives and in the lives of others.

As we celebrate the Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time, let us remember that Jesus, the Bread of Life, is the source of all sustenance. Through the Eucharist, he fills the hunger of our souls, inviting us to partake in the divine banquet that will lead us to eternal life. May we always seek his spiritual food, trusting in God's abundant provision and sharing it generously with all.

Yours in Christ,
Fr. Rudy