

In the Name of the Father, and of the ✠ Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

In one of the greatest miracles of the New Testament, in a demonstration of true love for neighbor, the Incarnate Lord feeds a great multitude by multiplying seven loaves and a few fish. The Lord took bread and gave thanks, broke them, and gave them to His disciples to set before the multitude.

The multitude ate and was filled. Seven baskets full of fragments were left after the crowd had eaten to the full, the leftovers exceeding the seven loaves with which the Lord started. But then, our Lord does something that transcends fleshly understanding. That crowd, full of miraculous bread and fish, He sends away.

He commands the creation. He speaks, and wind and waves obey. He withers trees and calls the dead to life. He enters locked rooms, He leaves the sealed tomb. The sun and stars must obey Him. So we pray with David “The eyes of all wait upon Thee, O Lord, and Thou givest them their meat in due season. Thou openest Thine hands, and satisfiest the desires of every living thing.” There, on that mountain, as the crowd is satisfied, the Lord fulfills David’s prophetic Word, as does the same Lord each time He provides food and drink for you.

As great a miracle as the feeding of the 4,000 was, consider this – the Lord daily feeds the world. He causes the sun to shine and the rain to fall, He ushers in seasons for planting and reaping, He brings forth crops and beasts, He gives men to be farmers and butchers and bakers. He gives you to work and provides your daily bread, bringing the fruits of the earth to your table and into your mouth for your nourishment and sustenance, that you be filled.

Is that not a greater miracle than the feeding of the 4,000? If there were nothing more, that would be enough in itself for which to thank and praise God and worship Him alone. But that is not all there is. There is more, abundantly more, baskets-full of fragments more.

“I have compassion on the multitude”, the Lord said. He had compassion because they were His creatures. Compassion means that He himself felt what they were suffering, and in mercy He brought a remedy to their affliction. He himself knew great hunger by His forty-day fast in the wilderness. But there He was not tempted to perform a miracle to make bread. For man does not live by bread alone, but by every Word that proceeds from the mouth of God.

Now, however, He was concerned that those who came to hear Him would faint on the way. What He would not do for Himself in the wilderness, He did for them from the mountain. He gave them heavenly bread to eat. They ate and were filled. He sent them away. He sent them away because the flesh craves temporal things. He sent them away that they might learn to seek the eternal.

That’s why the Apostle writes of the weakness of the flesh. A sinner presents his members as slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness leading to more lawlessness. So too the multitudes, even though they had eaten miraculous bread. In mercy, the Lord did not want them to put their trust in bread, in temporal things, in things that rust and spoil and fade and satisfy for the moment, but soon pass.

And so it has been with you. Hear the Word of the Apostle: when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. The multitudes remained with the Lord, without food, to hear His Word. Would that each of us were that hungry to hear His Word that we would prefer the Word of God to food. Would that each of us were that intent on seeking His teaching and His presence to abandon all else for three days.

But truth be told, the things of the world have seemed more attractive to you. You have sought bread that perishes instead of seeking the Bread of Life. What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death.

He fed the multitude and sent them away, for what He would do next only He could do. He would go the Way of the Cross. He would die the death that is the end of those things, the end of sin. But on that Way, the Way that He alone could go, the Way of Suffering, although the Way was long, He did not faint, although He had come from afar. And there, on that dusty Way wet with the Blood of the Messiah, there you see what the Prophet Isaiah promised: the Right Hand and the Arm of God's Strength, who became weak for your salvation.

He endured the Way of Suffering. He endured trial and smiting and scourge. He endured the bearing of that chafing gibbet. He endured consuming thirst, performing no miracle to satisfy Himself. He endured those dark hours on Calvary, where His true compassion for the multitude is truly seen, where His true love for neighbor is seen, where His love for you is seen. For there He paid the price for your sins. There He took your death upon Himself.

And the fruit of that tree, the bruised fruit of the tree of the cross, the fruit that fell to the ground and was deeply buried, He multiplies this day, that you eat miraculous Food, that you eat heavenly Bread, that you hear and believe and eat and be filled with Christ, the Bread of Life. For He defeated death for you.

It is you who are called The Holy People, for Christ's holiness is imputed to you. It is you who are called The Redeemed of the Lord, for by His Precious Blood He has purchased and won you. So now having been set free from sin, you have become slaves of God, which is true freedom. This day He miraculously fills you, but He does not send you away. He will never leave you nor forsake you, for you have your fruit in holiness, and the end, everlasting life.

The curse of the Old Testament pronounced by the Prophet was that Israel's grain was food for her enemies, and the sons of foreigners drank the wine for which she labored. But the blessing of the New Testament is that you who are brought together and made one in Christ's Holy Church drink His Wine in His Holy Courts, as He gives you His Blood to drink this day.

O Daughter of Zion, surely your salvation is coming, as He places His Body with Bread and His Blood with Wine that you eat and drink Food more miraculous than the loaves and fish, Food that never perishes, Food that sustains unto life everlasting.

And so it is you, dear Christian, you who are the fulfillment of the Prophet's Words, for it is you who are called Sought Out, for the Lord who made you has sought and found you. And it is you who are called a City Not Forsaken, for you are the Bride, the Holy Church, the True Israel, for whom the Lord filled the tomb, and then emptied it, that you be made the New Jerusalem, the

True Jerusalem, the City of Eternal Peace, that the Lord who created you, the Lord who redeemed you, the Lord who sanctified you, be praised in all the earth.

Baptized into His Name, forgiven your trespasses, filled with His Spirit, filled with His Word, His Body and His Blood, you seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and He adds all things to you. So you may return thanks in joy with David saying: “My mouth shall speak the praise of the Lord, and let all flesh bless His Holy Name forever and ever.”

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