



My Beloved Ones,

This Sunday's Gospel begins with Christ healing a large crowd, stating that, "...*He had compassion on them...*" (*Matthew 14:14*). As the day ends, the Disciples worry about the responsibility of feeding these thousands of people. When they ask Christ to dismiss the multitude, He responds once again with love and concern, "*They need not go away; you give them something to eat.*" (*Matthew 14:16*). Today's reading presents to us the well-known miracle of the Feeding of the Five Thousand, where our Lord not only transforms nature beyond human understanding but demonstrates true human compassion.

Indeed, St. John Chrysostom asks us to, "*Observe the wisdom of the Master; He says not straightway to them, 'I will give them something to eat;' for they would not easily have received this...*" Nature is only

miraculously changed when the ordinary—five loaves and two fish—becomes extraordinary. St John continues, "*For five loaves to make so many loaves...is no less a thing than to bring fruits from the earth, reptiles and other living things from the waters, which showed Him to be Lord both of land and sea.*" The King of all did not come to heal and feed the crowd because He wished to boast; He came to demonstrate God's mercy and love, and to teach us to do the same.

"By the example of the disciples, we also ought to be taught, that even though we have only a little, we ought to give to those in need. For when [the Disciples] bring their five loaves, they do not say, 'When shall we satisfy our own hunger?' but immediately obey..." Christ's ability to provide for the needs of many with little demonstrated His true Divinity, but the Disciples also showed patience, charity, and mercy towards their neighbors, by thinking of others before themselves.

In a way it is comforting to know that both this crowd and the Disciples—these first followers of Christ, had human weaknesses: hunger, exhaustion, and irritability. Christ, as Man surely felt tiredness and hunger; but as God, he saw the broken state of His creation, and demonstrated the kind of behavior our Heavenly Father expects from all of us. For while men may turn away from their neighbors, Christ Himself will always be present, gently saying, "*They need not go away...*" As much as the Feeding of the Five Thousand is a miracle, it should also move us to ask ourselves whether we put the needs of others before our own?

+ALEXIOS
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