

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

In the inspired account of the miraculous multiplication of the loaves and the fish, the Divinity of God the Son is clearly manifest. The Lord taught them to pray “give us this day our daily bread.” There, in Galilee, on the mountain, He answers that prayer. He does it in a way that no mere man could do.

At the Synagogue in Nazareth He read the description of the long-awaited Messiah from the Isaiah scroll, and told them “Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.” On the mountain in Galilee the Scripture was fulfilled in their eating. But it was fulfilled in a Mystery, the Mystery of the multiplication of the loaves and fish.

All the Evangelists record the miracle. But St. John includes two facts that the others omit. The first is a seemingly unimportant detail – “Now there was much grass in that place.” It seems unimportant unless one knows the Scripture. Knowing the Scriptures, we see the fulfillment of the Messianic Promise: “He makes me to lie down in green pastures.” It is the Lord, the True Shepherd King of Israel, who gives them miraculous bread to eat, there in that grassy place, in those green pastures. He opens His hands, and satisfies the desires of every living thing.

There is another fact that St. John includes by which the whole account of the miracle reveals deeper theological significance. St. John writes: “Now the Passover, a feast of the Jews, was near.” The Passover was the Feast commanded by God in which the Jews annually remembered and celebrated the greatest act of deliverance in the Old Testament – the Exodus.

The focal point of that Feast was bread – bread made without yeast. It was to remind the Jews of their hasty exit from Egyptian captivity. It was to remind them of the heavenly Manna, the miraculous, Heavenly Bread that God gave them in the desert on the way to the Promised Land.

So the Lord asks Philip “Where shall we buy bread, that these may eat?” This He said to test him, for He Himself knew what He would do. For He knew what He did in the desert for Israel. He gave them miraculous bread from heaven. And so He would do on that Galilean mountain – the One born in Bethlehem, the House of Bread, the True Bread from Heaven, the fulfillment of the miraculous Manna, Christ would give them their daily bread.

Israel ate manna in the desert and died. But on that mountain in Galilee is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die. For the Lord who miraculously multiplied the loaves and fish, the next day taught them: “I AM the Living Bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this Bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My Flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world.” He offers miraculous, life-giving Bread.

Five barley loaves isn’t much. Nor are two small fish. Barley bread is the bread of the poor. Barley bread is humble. It speaks to the State of Humiliation of the Lord. He who had the heavens as His footstool humbled Himself. He took on Flesh. He was born in the most lowly of circumstances to poor parents, who made the offering allowed only to the poor at His Presentation.

Like the humble loaves of barley bread, at first glance there was nothing about the Christ that seemed royal. He humbled Himself. He came to serve. He came to suffer. He fasted forty days and forty nights. He died. And yet, in a more miraculous multiplication, He came that others may eat of Him and live. And that many more than 5000. He came for the life of the world.

There, on that mountain in Galilee, there were two kinds of eating. In the first, many ate barley bread and their hunger was satisfied. These are they that would have taken Him by force to make Him king. But He was not that kind of king. Those who thus ate would soon be hungry again. Those who thus ate would die, as do all men with the flesh of the first man.

The second kind of eating was different. Those who ate in this way also ate barley bread, the same barley bread as all the others. But the true eating was not the barley bread. The true eating was to believe in Jesus, to believe in His Divinity, to believe He is the long-awaited Savior, the Messiah. They believed that He is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world.

Believing, they truly ate. They ate the Bread of Life. Believing, they ate the True Manna from heaven, the Best Bread. Believing, theirs was a better Passover, a better Promised Land - a better Passover, for whoever eats Christ will never die; a better Promised Land, for believing, heaven was opened to them.

So it is that the Lord bids you: "Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, and let your soul delight itself in abundance. Incline your ear, and come to Me. Hear, and your soul shall live." So "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the Lord, and He will have mercy on Him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon." The Promise is for you: Repent, and believe. Hear Christ, believe and truly eat, and you will live.

The Lord bids you seek Him "... while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near." For He is our Passover. He is the True Spotless Lamb slain. He endured a bitterness no other man could have endured, His Holy Passion and His Precious Death. They did take Him by force and call Him King – Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews, as Pilate's epithet proclaimed.

In love, as He miraculously fed the 5000, so does He give you your daily bread, as you pray, to you, and to the whole world. But eating that bread, you will hunger again. Believing in Him, you eat the Bread of Life. So you are not children of the bondwoman, but of the Free. You are free because of His arrest. You are proclaimed innocent because of the guilt He bore. You are vindicated because He was convicted. You are spared, because He was sentenced. You are forgiven, you are free because He went to the cross. You live, because He died for you.

So "Rejoice!", dear Christian. Bask in the rose glimpse of the bright white of His Resurrection. Rejoice, that you may eat and drink and be satisfied, as Christ the True Bread gives you His Body with Bread, a Bread more miraculous than the barley loaves, in a Sacramental eating by which the Body and Blood of Christ are your miraculous Food and Drink.

Believing, you can proclaim with those who saw the miracle: "This truly is the Prophet who is to come into the world!" But He does not depart from you. He is your eternal King. And He will not ascend alone, but He will take you with Him - into heaven.

St. John 6:1-15
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