

## Jesus' Greatest Miracle

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Jesus revealed to us His divinity through His words and His actions. In all four Gospels, crowds follow Jesus. Many of them want to know and see Jesus as they have heard about the miracles He performs. Wherever He goes, he heals the sick, makes the blind see, and the mute speak while curing those possessed by evil spirits. All these miracles are signs of His divinity. They are all attracted by Jesus' speaking authority and **His divine power of healing**. Miracles are central to our Christian Faith. Ask your friend or neighbor: "Do you believe in miracles?" Follow-up with questions about Jesus' miracles, including: "Which one is Jesus' greatest miracle?"

I have asked several parishioners which miracle is Jesus' greatest one. Here are some of their answers: Jesus walking on the water; Jesus cleanses a leper; Jesus feeding the five thousand; Jesus healing the blind man; Jesus resurrecting Lazarus. Clearly, it is an unfair question because any miracle by Jesus while on earth is a great sign of his divine power. They are not to be compared. In fact, one could answer that all miracles by Jesus during His lifetime on earth are of the same greatness. They all served a specific purpose at a specific time. A better question could be, "*Is Jesus, after His Ascension to Heaven, still involved in miracles?*" Yes! And in many ways those miracles can affect anyone at any time. As promised, Jesus, while in Heaven, sends us individually and collectively His Spirit—the Holy Spirit. Through the Holy Spirit, miracles occur in each of the seven sacraments established by Jesus while on earth and then entrusted to the church. One could argue that the greatest miracle today is the miracle of the **Eucharist**. At any Mass celebrated today, and in any place of the world, **Jesus becomes really present** in the offered bread and wine: **His body and His blood!** As in other miracles today, the **Holy Spirit** is the one acting at Mass! Do you know of any miracle greater than the Eucharist?

We are blessed this summer to have five Sundays in a row where we hear from Chapter 6 of John's Gospel. This occurs every three years in Mark's Liturgical Year. As Mark's Gospel is the shortest one, and as we do not have a Liturgical Year for John, this is a good time to hear about John's Eucharistic Discourse (his famous Chapter 6 which is essential for our understanding of the Mass and the Eucharistic Mystery). Instead of covering the Narrative of the Institution of the Eucharist at the Last Supper (as in Mark and Matthew), one can wonder: why does John begin Chapter 6 with the Miracle of the Multiplication of the Bread?

In last week's Gospel (John 6:1-15), John describes the *Miracle of Feeding the Five Thousand*. Looking at John's detailed narrative, one can see the similarities with the Mass, which is the Liturgy of the Word followed by the Liturgy of the Eucharist. We know from Mark's Gospel (Mark 6:30-34), heard two weeks ago, that just before the multiplication of the loaves, Jesus and His 12 Apostles had gone to a deserted place to rest for a while. But the crowds attracted by Jesus' teaching and miracles, had followed them, and Jesus' "*heart was moved with pity for they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things.*" This teaching by Jesus is the precursor of our Liturgy of the Word at Mass: readings from Scripture concluding with the proclamation of the Gospel (by priest or deacon), followed by the homily to inspire all participants on the basis of the day's readings and to encourage everyone to follow Jesus in our daily lives in practical terms relevant to our times.

Back to John's Gospel, beginning of Chapter 6, we imagine Jesus sitting down with His disciples and seeing the large crowd coming to Him. This is an ideal setting for him to give a sign of His divinity through another miracle. He knows that the boy's five barley loaves and the two fish are totally inadequate to feed 5,000 men. But, He is also aware of the divine powers given to Him by the Father and He doesn't hesitate to have all 5,000 recline on the grass. "*Then Jesus took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed them to those reclining...*" Not only did they have their fill, but there were also fragments left

**over** that filled 12 wicker baskets! This is the amazing **miracle**: with the five barley loaves, the 5,000 men had more than they could eat.

It is such an important miracle in Jesus' life that it is the **only miracle** found in **each** of the Four Gospels. **Each** of the Evangelists understood the great meaning of the multiplication of the loaves: it anticipates what happened right after Jesus' Resurrection and Ascension into Heaven when the first Christians gathered in the homes the day after the Sabbath so as **to break the bread together** after hearing God's Word. Through the **Holy Spirit**, at every Mass Jesus offers himself as supernatural bread: the **Eucharistic bread of life, His own body and blood!** In this way, it is no longer the miraculous feeding of 5,000. It is now the miraculous **spiritual feeding of millions and millions of people** every day, everywhere in the whole world. **This is Jesus' greatest miracle!**

Let us pray that the **Holy Spirit** will help each one of us to be more attentive to the **Mass**, including the Scripture readings, prayers, and most importantly, attentive to the Consecration of the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ - preparing ourselves to receive Him at **Holy Communion**, and to be transformed spiritually!

**One in Christ,  
Fr. Alain**