

Homily for the 4th Sunday of Lent (*Laetare*), Extraordinary Form
by Fr. Valentin Iurochkin
John 6: 1-15

In the beginning of this Sacred Lenten season, the Church presented to us the temptations of our Lord. In the first temptation, the Devil was trying to convince our Lord to make from the stones the loaves of bread. We read: *“The tempter came to him and said, ‘If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.’ Jesus answered, ‘It is written: ‘Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.’ ”* So, why does our Lord operate a miracle of the multiplication of the loaves of bread in today’s Gospel? Why? Pope Benedict XVI was rightly asking: *“Why does Christ now do the very thing he has already rejected as a temptation before? The crowds had left everything in order to come hear God’s word; they are the people who have opened their hearts to God and to one another; they are therefore ready to receive bread with the proper disposition.”* Then we can say the answer becomes clear: in order to be able to work a miracle of conversion of the sinner whose hearts are hardened, we have to open up our heart to God’s word first. And It was precisely what Christ did in the wilderness. Each one of us, as Christ’s disciples, will never be able to feed the hearts of the people that hunger for the truth and righteousness, unless we die to ourselves first, thus becoming bread for others.

Finishing his idea, Benedict XVI says that *“This miracle of the loaves has three aspects then. It is preceded by the search for God, for His word for the teaching that sets the whole life on the right path. Furthermore, God is asked to supply the bread. Finally, readiness to share with one another is the essential element of the miracle. Listening to God becomes living with God, and leads from faith to love, to the discovery of other. Jesus is not indifferent toward men’s hunger, their*

bodily needs, but he places these things in the proper context and the proper order”.

Considering today’s Epistle concerning Abraham, we can clearly see how in him *“listening to God becomes living with God”*. One of the close collaborators of Scott Hahn, John Bergsma, writes: *“In the Genesis 12, Abraham undertook a journey that parted him from the family of his past; in Genesis 22, Abraham undertakes a journey that will part him from the family of his future, his descendants through Isaac. Because Abraham passes the test of faith, he becomes the subject of the Universal blessing”*. We do not know anything about Abraham’s past family; we do contemplate Abraham ready to sacrifice to God the family of his future. This walking by faith of Abraham becomes the cause of the Universal blessing for those who believe in God; for those who left everything behind them like Peter and entrusted the whole of their future to God. This Lenten season is a call for us to imitate the faith of Abraham. Every Christian, every one of you, similar to Abraham, became travelers to the promised Land, who left your past behind you and entrusted in the hands of God whatever may to you come in the future. And this is something very important to remember. It is true that sometimes God keeps silence when we are looking for the answers. Yet remember what St. Augustine said: *“If God seems slow in responding you, it is because He is preparing a better gift. He will not deny us. God withholds what you are not yet ready for. He wants you to have a lively desire for His greatest gift. All of which is to say, pray always and do not lose heart”*.

So as we hasten to the contemplation of the greatest miracle of Jesus – His glorious Resurrection – let us ask His to help us, similar to Abraham to walk by faith during our pilgrimage here on earth so that listening to God in this Sacred Season of Lent may become for us an opportunity to always be living with Christ.