

17th Sunday (2021 B)

Who of us hasn't had a few more mouths to feed than we anticipated? Relatives drop by, or the kids bring home hungry friends at dinnertime.

So, you throw a little more pasta in the pot, add water and starch to the sauce, and cut the meat into slightly smaller pieces. You do the best you can with what you have.

My mother had to feed 12 children on a rented dirt farm in the Mid-West, and one of her signature dishes was "Bread Soup"—Stale bread stirred into warm milk with a few herbs and spices. Um Um! Only later did we kids learn that this was Mom's way of feeding us when the cupboards were literally BARE. She did the best she could with what she had.

But these examples are NOTHING compared to the great miracles talked about in today's readings. Elisha feeds a hundred with 20 barley loaves, and that's considered a miracle, so imagine the magnitude of Jesus' sign by feeding 5000 with a mere 5 little loaves.

In the early 1980's, when I was in Seminary College, there was a movement that tried to rationally explain a lot of the miracles in the Bible. They'd say that cures could be caused by rushes of adrenalin, and the Manna in the desert was insect residue, and the Quail were thrown off their regular migratory pattern and landed in the Jewish Camp, and that even the parting of the Red Sea was some sort of Natural Phenomenon—They weren't trying to subvert God's miraculous power, because the timing and such was still supernatural, but they were trying

to show how God uses his creation (in itself a miraculous wonder) to perform his other miraculous deeds.

Thus, for today's particular miracle of the loaves and fishes, I remember they said that Jesus may not have necessarily created all of the food the people ate, but the miracle was that he got everyone to sit down together and share the food that forward-minded thinkers, like the boy with the 5 loaves and 2 fishes, might have brought with them on such a journey.

They feel that before traipsing after an itinerate preacher in the wilderness; some of them would have had the good sense to pack a lunch.

It's a little less spectacular explanation... but reasonable. And they like to claim that the miracle was in the sharing of each other's food.

I don't really like this interpretation, because it takes away from the miraculous multitude of the multiplication, but there is some merit in the mention of the sharing. After all, the young boy in the Gospel, and the man who came from Baal-shalishah were at least willing to come forth with their mere offerings. This is to be lauded.

And both of these incidents are agreed upon by most Biblical scholars to be pre-figurations of the Eucharist where Jesus transubstantiates Bread into his very body, and shares it with his disciples at the Last Supper.

And that is really the "SUPER" miracle that I would like to touch upon today. And that we'll be hearing about over the next few weeks through St. John's Bread of life Discourse in the Gospel readings.

Jesus fed 5,000 men on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, and that was an awesome feat.

But, how much more spectacular is the fact that He has fed Billions upon billions of faithful Catholics over the course of some 20 centuries with his very own body and blood. He will feed US with it here today, and he will continue to feed countless multitudes more until He comes again at the end of time. .

And how does he do THIS? By sharing the most precious thing he has with us all. By sacrificing his very life. He gives not only spiritual food, but also his very life to US.. all.

And we in turn are not meant to hoard our blessings. We are sent out from this Mass to share what we have received with the World at large.....to imitate Christ... to do the BEST with what you have.... is to give it all away.

So.....Go ahead! Share your food..... Share your FAITH..... Share YOUR life.

Let's see how many people **WE**..... can feed.