*How hungry are you for God?*

We hear today of one of the most famous miracles that Jesus performed. He multiplies the 5 loaves and 2 fish to feed the 5000 people before him. There is so much to learn from this event, but let’s consider the crowd of 5000 and place ourselves in it – what were they doing there? What are we doing here?

As we heard last week, Jesus had actually gone with his disciples on retreat up the mountain to get some rest from the crowds, but they find him, and follow him in huge numbers.

*They are hungry for God.* They are looking to nourish that hunger coming from deep within their souls.

*And that is the hunger that we all have.* When we pray, when we come to Mass, when we spend time in spiritual reading and scripture, we are looking to *feed* that hunger. When we do good works, we look to feed that desire to love as Christ loves. Often we don’t even know what it is that we seek, but there is always that instinctive, deep down desire for something that will satisfy our souls and help make sense of our lives.

From this miracle account of the multiplication of loaves and fish, we realize that Jesus is always there to feed us *in abundance*.

And he feeds the crowd through *Word* and *Sign*. He teaches them, but uses this miracle as a sign for the people of his power, of his authority, and of his desire to satiate that hunger within, also foreshadowing the miracle of the Eucharist which he will institute at the Last Supper.

When we come to Mass then, we add our names to that crowd of 5000. We come to be fed through the Word of God that is proclaimed, and to be sustained in sacrament through the Eucharist in which we participate.

There are *2 perspectives* of this miracle event to learn from:

The first is the perspective of Philip who Jesus asked to go and feed the crowd. Philip sizes up the 5000 people before him, and concludes that this task will be impossible, and says to Jesus, ‘*not even 6 months wages would be enough to provide food for everybody!*’ He takes that very rational approach that excludes any possible divine intervention. Philip represents the type of person that has a hunger for God, but seems reluctant to believe that hunger can be satisfied

Contrast that with the boy who holds the 5 loaves and 2 fish. He has this little bit to offer, and willingly gives it up to Jesus to do what he will with it, certainly not expecting the miracle that would take place. The boy gives the little that he has as he places his trust in the hands of Jesus.

*We need to identify with the perspective of the boy.* When we come to Mass, we bring that humble offering of ourselves. We can’t do much of our own accord, but when we surrender it to Christ, he can multiply our ‘littleness’ into something much more to build up the Kingdom of God by transformation from within.

Because when we open ourselves up to the grace of God, *life changes*.

We come to Mass to be fed by the *Word of God*. Our scripture readings are not meant to be just a bunch of ancient texts to be heard and studied – they are meant to be the *living Word of God* – they are meant to be heard as a conversation that our Lord initiates with us as if they were being proclaimed from his very lips. We respond to this conversation through our prayerful reflection on what has been read, asking our Lord to show us what he wants us to take away from this very *personal* communication with us.

Because, it is a deeply *personal* conversation. If I went around and asked 10 people what they heard in today’s readings and gospel, I am sure that I would get 10 different responses, because indeed the Word of God is *alive* – it’s meant to penetrate our lives, and transform the people we are into the people God calls us to be, because through his Word, he speaks to each of us in different ways, addressing our own particular situations in life.

And also, we come to be fed most profoundly by *the Eucharist*. The Lord himself coming to feed us through his very *body and blood* – to sustain us in our spiritual journey through life. He comes down from his mountain – his glorious throne in heaven – to feed us, and satisfy that hunger we have for him.

It is through this two-fold feeding of *Word and Sacrament* that Jesus continues this miracle of multiplication today through his body, the Church. *Notice the detail of how many baskets of bread were left over* – 12 full baskets – not only has Jesus provided, but has provided *in abundance*. The 12 baskets also represent more specifically the 12 apostles who would go forth to build the Church, the 12 foundation stones on which the Body of Christ has flourished, having been multiplied to over 2 billion Christians in today’s world.

Also symbolized in these 12 baskets is that *abundance of grace* that God gives us. We always have ‘leftovers’ when we leave Mass – we take with us a ‘doggie bag’ of grace when we leave, never quite sure how God will use it, but we can be assured that none of our spiritual nourishment ever goes to waste, even when we don’t see the direct results.

Whenever someone tells me they don’t come to church because they don’t get anything out of it, I always ask the question, do you remember what you had for dinner last Wednesday night or even last night? Usually we don’t, but we can be certain that it nourished us *in that moment* and kept us going. The Mass is our spiritual nourishment – we can’t always see how God’s grace is working within us, but we can be sure that we are nourished in some way through Word and Sacrament, and never do we leave without those multiplied 'left overs’ to strengthen us in our daily lives.

Always remain hungry for God, and never take for granted the power of our heavenly food. God will be faithful, feeding us in abundance to help us build and multiply the most important relationship possible – our relationship with the Son of God, our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.