

CATHOLIC CONVERSATIONS ON THE SCRIPTURES

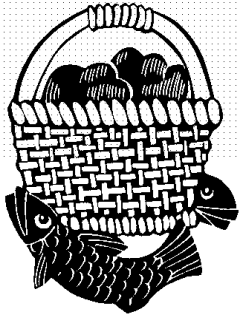
Archdiocese of Miami - Ministry of Christian Formation

July 26, 2009

17th Sunday in Ordinary Time (Cycle B)

Gospel reading

John 6:1-15



Jesus went across the Sea of Galilee. A large crowd followed him, because they saw the signs he was performing on the sick. Jesus went up on the mountain, and there he sat down with his disciples. The Jewish feast of Passover was near. When Jesus raised his eyes and saw that a large crowd was coming to him, he said to Philip, "Where can we buy enough food for them to eat?" He said this to test him, because he himself knew what he was going to do. Philip answered him, "Two hundred days' wages worth of food would not be enough for each of them to have a little." One of his disciples, Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, said to him, "There is a boy here who has five barley loaves* and two fish; but what good are these for so many?" Jesus said, "Have the people recline." Now there was a great deal of grass in that place. So

the men reclined, about five thousand in number. Then Jesus took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed them to those who were reclining, and also as much of the fish as they wanted. When they had had their fill, he said to his disciples, "Gather the fragments left over, so that nothing will be wasted." So they collected them, and filled twelve wicker baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves that had been more than they could eat. When the people saw the sign he had done, they said, "This is truly the Prophet, the one who is to come into the world." Since Jesus knew that they were going to come and carry him off to make him king, he withdrew again to the mountain alone. **The food of the poor*

Brief commentary:

Today's passage comes from the beginning of the Bread of Life discourse (John 6:1-71), so called because Jesus teaches that he is the Bread of Life, the food that will forever sustain those who believe in him. The multiplication of the loaves is the fourth sign that appears in the Gospel according to John. It is the only miracle story found in all four gospels (occurring twice in Mark and Matthew). The main reason could be that it was seen as the anticipation of the Last Supper and of the consequent Church's celebration of the Eucharist. The story is filled with images that we now associate with the Eucharistic banquet: "Jesus took the loaves of bread," "gave thanks", and "distributed them." This ritual reminds us of the daily bread we ask for when we pray the Our Father. The story symbolizes the food that is really available through Jesus. It connotes a new exodus. The twelve baskets of leftovers may point to the banquet of the Messiah at the final coming of the kingdom. This miracle also looks backward to the feeding of Israel with manna in the desert at the time of the Exodus (Ex 16), a miracle that according to some Jewish beliefs would be repeated in the messianic age (2 Baruch 29:8).

Today's reading offers three significant messages:

- The Jewish belief in a God who always provided for his people is reflected in this miracle. The difference is that Jesus did not let the disciples just watch. He made them participate.
- The bread that is shared in solidarity always gets multiplied by the power of God.
- God never abandons those who share from their poverty to nourish others.

For our shared or personal reflection:

After a brief pause for silent reflection share your answers, ideas or feelings

1. Do I share what I have with the hungry? Give examples.
2. How am I helping to satisfy the deeper spiritual hunger and thirst that haunts people today?

Suggested readings: Catechism of the Catholic Church paragraphs 1328-1329; 1333-1344; 1397; 1402-06.