



The miracle of Jesus feeding the multitude with loaves of bread and fish: scene from the Cathedral of St Rumbold in Mechelen, Belgium

Jesus' initial reaction to the arrival of the crowds is to welcome them, teach them and cure those in need of healing.

There is no suggestion that the people concerned are actually hungry and the episode can be read, as all the "miracle" stories can be understood, as symbolic, that is, that there is a deeper meaning to these actions of Jesus. The mention of twelve baskets reinforces this idea.

The way in which we refer to this incident is important: it is better to describe it as "the feeding of the crowds" rather than "the multiplication of the loave". The latter phrase concentrates on the "miraculous" aspect of the event, but the New Testament uses the expression "works of power", emphasising that this is the power, the kingdom of God breaking into the lives of people in need. The scriptural background to this story is God's providing food for the people of Israel during their journey through the wilderness from Egypt to the Promised Land: there is a hint about this in the disciples' remark to Jesus that "we are in a desert place here", rather than "a lonely place" as our text renders it. Jesus is thus echoing God's concern by providing food for the people, and the disciples share in his ministry by distributing the bread to those present, who number five thousand men: interestingly, in his account of the same incident, Matthew adds "to say nothing of women and children".

We might note how Luke describes Jesus' actions: he *takes* the bread, *says the blessing*, *breaks* it and *gives* it: this is the language we find used at the Last Supper in connection with the institution of the Eucharist. The feeding of the crowds foreshadows the institution of the Eucharist, which, in its turn, anticipates the banquet in the final Messianic kingdom. ■

REFLECT

It is easy to become preoccupied with how this event took place: there are some plausible rationalisations which explain away the "miraculous" element and reduce it to an act of sharing on the part of the people present: some might suggest that that would be an even greater miracle. But we have to ask ourselves: "What does the account mean?" rather than "Did it actually happen?" or "How did it happen?"

Perhaps we might concentrate on the idea of Jesus nourishing the people who have come to him. It is important to keep in mind that none of the four Gospel accounts of this incident states that those present were actually hungry. In our celebration of the Eucharist, we see connections with the feeding in the two parts, word and sacrament. Jesus nourishes our mind, our faith and understanding of what it means for our

LEARN

The feeding of the five thousand is the only miracle story recorded in all four Gospels.

It is Jesus who provides bread for the people in the desert (lonely) place, just as God did for Israel in their journey through the wilderness.

The feast of Corpus Christi was one of the most popular celebrations with processions of the Blessed Sacrament.

This feast was the lay version of Holy Thursday, which also celebrated the institution of the priesthood.

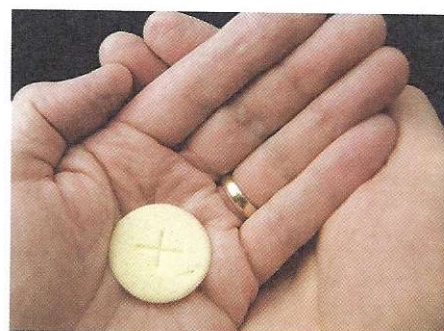
SAY

How can he deny me heaven,
who here on earth himself has
given?

(St Alphonsus Liguori)

DO

As you receive Holy Communion, renew your belief that you are actually welcoming Jesus into your very self.



everyday lives in the light of the word of God: hence preaching is a grave responsibility for those concerned. We are further sustained by receiving Jesus into ourselves in the form of bread and wine. This presence of Jesus in the consecrated bread and wine is the focus of today's feast. ■

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

He fed them with the finest wheat
and satisfied them with honey from the rock.

GLORIA

Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace to people of good will.

We praise you,
we bless you,
we adore you,
we glorify you,
we give you thanks for your great glory,
Lord God, heavenly King,
O God, almighty Father.

Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son,
Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,
you take away the sins of the world,
have mercy on us;
you take away the sins of the world,
receive our prayer;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father,
have mercy on us.

For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father.
Amen.

COLLECT

O God, who in this wonderful Sacrament
have left us a memorial of your Passion,
grant us, we pray,
so to revere the sacred mysteries of your
Body and Blood
that we may always experience in ourselves
the fruits of your redemption.
Who live and reign with God the Father
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

FIRST READING

Genesis 14:18-20

A reading from the book of Genesis.
Melchizedek king of Salem brought bread
and wine; he was a priest of God Most High.
He pronounced this blessing:

"Blessed be Abraham by God Most High,
creator of heaven and earth,
and blessed be God Most High for handing
over your enemies to you."

And Abraham gave him a tithe of everything.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

PSALM

Psalm 109

Response:

**You are a priest for ever,
a priest like Melchizedek of old.**

- The Lord's revelation to my Master:
"Sit on my right:
I will put your foes beneath your feet." (R.)
- The Lord will send from Zion
your sceptre of power:
rule in the midst of all your foes. (R.)
- A prince from the day of your birth
on the holy mountains;
from the womb before the daybreak I
begot you. (R.)
- The Lord has sworn an oath he will not
change.
"You are a priest for ever,
a priest like Melchizedek of old." (R.)

SECOND READING 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

A reading from the first letter of St Paul to the
Corinthians.

This is what I received from the Lord, and
in turn passed on to you: that on the same
night that he was betrayed, the Lord Jesus
took some bread, and thanked God for it and
broke it, and he said, "This is my body, which
is for you; do this as a memorial of me." In
the same way he took the cup after supper,
and said, "This cup is the new covenant in
my blood. Whenever you drink it, do this as
a memorial of me." Until the Lord comes,
therefore, every time you eat this bread and
drink this cup, you are proclaiming his death.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

SEQUENCE (shorter form)

Behold the bread of angels, sent
For pilgrims in their banishment,
The bread for God's true children meant,
That may not unto dogs be given:
Oft in the olden types foreshowed;
In Isaac on the altar bowed,
And in the ancient paschal food,
And in the manna sent from heaven.

Come then, good shepherd, bread divine,
Still show to us thy mercy sign;
Oh, feed us still, still keep us thine;
So may we see thy glories shine
In fields of immortality;

O thou, the wisest, mightiest, best,
Our present food, our future rest,
Come make us each thy chosen guest,
Co-heirs of thine, and comrades blest
With saints whose dwelling is with thee.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia!

I am the living bread which has come down
from heaven,
says the Lord.

Anyone who eats this bread will live for ever.

Alleluia!

GOSPEL

Luke 9:11-17

A reading from the holy Gospel according to
Luke.

Jesus made the crowds welcome and talked
to them about the kingdom of God; and he
cured those who were in need of healing.

It was late afternoon when the Twelve came
to him and said, "Send the people away, and
they can go to the villages and farms round
about to find lodging and food; for we are in
a lonely place here." He replied, "Give them
something to eat yourselves." But they said,
"We have no more than five loaves and two
fish, unless we are to go ourselves and buy
food for all these people." For there were
about five thousand men. But he said to his
disciples, "Get them to sit down in parties of
about fifty." They did so and made them all
sit down. Then he took the five loaves and
the two fish, raised his eyes to heaven, and
said the blessing over them; then he broke
them and handed them to his disciples to
distribute among the crowd. They all ate as
much as they wanted, and when the scraps
remaining were collected they filled twelve
baskets.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

PROFESSION OF FAITH

I believe in one God,
the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all things visible and invisible.

I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the Only Begotten Son of God,
born of the Father before all ages.
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made, consubstantial with
the Father;
through him all things were made.
For us men and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,

(all bow during the next three lines)

and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the
Virgin Mary,
and became man.

For our sake he was crucified under
Pontius Pilate,
he suffered death and was buried,
and rose again on the third day
in accordance with the Scriptures.
He ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory
to judge the living and the dead
and his kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord,
the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is adored
and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.

I believe in one, holy, catholic and
apostolic Church.

I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness
of sins
and I look forward to the resurrection of the
dead
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Grant your Church, O Lord, we pray,
the gifts of unity and peace,
whose signs are to be seen in mystery
in the offerings we here present.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood
remains in me and I in him, says the Lord.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Grant, O Lord, we pray,
that we may delight for all eternity
in that share in your divine life,
which is foreshadowed in the present age
by our reception of your precious Body and
Blood.
Who live and reign for ever and ever.
Amen.

May the Lord, support us all the day long,
until the shadows lengthen,
and the evening comes, and the busy world
is hushed, and the fever of life is over,
and our work is done. Then in your mercy,
grant us a safe lodging and a holy rest,
and peace at the last.

St John Henry Newman