

The Feast of God's Leftovers

17th Sunday in Ordinary Time year B

John 6:1-15

Chapter 6 of the gospel of John.

Previously, on the Sabbath, Jesus healed a man ill for thirty-eight years.

Can you say, “a *good* thing”?

It *is* a good thing, a good thing which, however,

rubbed a certain group of Jews the wrong way,

Why be disturbed by an act of goodness?

These Jews thought they owned the Sabbath.

In John 5, verse 16 we read,

“The Jews began to persecute Jesus because he did this on a Sabbath.”

In fact, in verse 18 we read, **“They tried all the more to kill him.”**

And so, the ambiance is *terrific*

(imagine *the* most tense situation you can, and then some!).

Jesus, however, boldly reveals His oneness with the Father

—*who owns the Sabbath.*

Enough is said, and Jesus has no time to waste with such anger.

He crosses the sea of Galilee.

He comes to the other side, followed by a large crowd.

The large crowd is following because they witnessed the healing of the man.

Jesus ascends the mountain, with his disciples.

Supposedly there are really only small hills in this region.

John perhaps shares the incident with, in mind,

what Isaiah said regarding Mount Zion—which symbolizes heaven.

**“On this mountain the LORD of hosts will provide for all peoples
a feast of rich food and choice wines,**

juicy, rich food and pure, choice wines.” Isaiah 25:6

Jesus comes to communicate the reality of heaven, of God.

Such communication is one of pure love, and thus rich, pure, and choice.

It is uniquely *satisfying*.

And, as we will see, we experience it in a special way in the Eucharist.

From the mountain, Jesus sees the large crowd.

He feels their pain—in the truest sense, not like a talk show host.

Jesus knows their hunger.

Interestingly, He does not wave a wand and produce the unbeatable picnic.

He does not take a “wad” of cash, and send an Apostle to the market.

Instead, Jesus engages the Apostles, His friends unexpectedly.

He calls Philip.

Why Philip? It is hard to say.

Philip particularly needed to be taught,
and this is, amongst other things, a teaching moment.

Jesus tests him.

In other words, Jesus lovingly obliges Philip (and the other Eleven)
to discover how he needs Jesus and must lean on Jesus.

In seeming desperation, Andrew intervenes.

“Well, here’s a kid with five barley loaves and two fish!”

Then notice what follows.

Andrew expresses cynicism, “**What good are these for so many?**”

Jesus, however, wastes no time.

There is not time to waste in love, “**Have the people recline.**”

At least 5000 men sit (the traditional Jewish way of counting)

Jesus then performs a simple action that foreshadows the Eucharist:
an expression of gratitude to the Father

and a generous, satisfying gift to overflowing.

Such is the Eucharist:

a generous, satisfying gift to overflowing from the Father.

Twelve baskets of fragments left are gathered.

They can be said to represent the Twelve Apostles,
who will continue to share the gift which this miracle foreshadows.

And as Saint Thomas Aquinas says (+1274),

“**There are twelve because they were to preach the faith of the Trinity
to the four parts of the world.**” (Commentary on the Gospel of John)

We could say much about this simple yet mysterious foreshadowing.

Instead, notice what occurs *after*, when the crowd realizes

that Jesus has performed a miracle, a sign.

They declare he must be the prophet: Moses or perhaps Elijah.

And they wish to seize Him and make Him king.

They wish to take possession of Him.

Jesus, however, quietly withdraws to the mountain.

Why does Jesus withdraw?

Was it that

- He was exhausted?
- He does not do crowds after all?
- He hates to be touched?
-

It seems that Jesus withdraws for several, *other* reasons:

1. The crowd's motives were not pure.
The attempt to enthrone Jesus was about them, not really Him.
Saint Thomas Aquinas notes (in his commentary on this passage) that
**“People often want as their ruler
someone who will provide them with temporal things.”**
Jesus wants us to approach Him out of love, not just so to get things.
Jesus is not the big candy dispenser in the sky.
2. No one makes Jesus king, because He is a *divine* king.
He is king because He is God.
3. There is no possessing Jesus. There is only surrendering to Him,
and letting Him freely fill us.

In all of this, there is an invitation for us to examine our hearts
regarding Jesus, regarding God:

- Do I seek God simply out of love, simply to love?
- Or do I seek God with entitlement mentality,
crying “gimme, gimme, gimme”?
- Do I try to put God in my pocket, and bring Him down to size,
my size?
- Do I surrender each day, and let Jesus feed me deep inside?
- Do I really believe that Jesus will satisfy my heart?
- Do I at least tell Jesus if/when I do not believe it?
- Do I seek intimacy with Jesus in the Eucharist?

Jesus wishes to pour upon us the Holy Spirit that all of this be possible...

Receive and be set free.

Receive and let your joy be complete.