

Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time



This Sunday we begin hearing from the sixth chapter of John's Gospel, an important segment of scripture that begins to inform our understanding of the Eucharist. Over the next six weeks, we will hear the bread of life discourse each Sunday and explore the words of Jesus while overlapping our experience in recovery. The chapter begins with a story told in all four gospel accounts—the feeding of five thousand with five loaves of bread and two fish.

If we read John 6 through the lens of the Catholic Mass, we can find several spiritual principles that also apply to our journey through addiction recovery. First, we continue to find a magnetic attraction that brings people to Jesus. This same force remains with us today as we are drawn to encounter God through the Eucharistic celebration and as we seek healing for the addictions, compulsions, and unhealthy attachments that darken our lives.

We do not need to bring much to the table as Jesus provides in abundance with the little that we do have. This Sunday's Gospel story begins with Jesus sitting down (a posture used for teaching during the time) with his disciples as large crowds began to approach. It is noted that Passover is near, a Jewish tradition that remembered the saving grace of a sacrificed lamb. Next, questions surface as to how the crowds will be fed:

*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.*

This same movement takes place in persona Christi ("in the person of Christ") when we come together to celebrate the Catholic Mass. Jesus teaches us through the Word of God and informs us with a homily. We pray together then remember our Paschal Lamb, Jesus Christ, who earned our freedom and salvation through death on a cross.

As Jesus instructed, the priest takes bread, breaks it, gives thanks, and distributes it among many to feed our spiritual hunger. As Catholics, this is our Eucharistic rhythm. The food that Christ offers is lasting and remains, providing an abundance to share with others. The Gospel continues:

*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.*

How often have we sought fulfillment and satisfaction in things not of Christ? It may last for a moment, but in many cases spirals into a false idol. The Body of Christ—present in the Eucharist and united in fellowship with those in communion with Jesus—heals us and is a pillar of our recovery and spiritual growth.

Reflection Questions

- Consider and describe a time when God provided for you despite your doubt or lack of hope.
- How does your experience in recovery inform the way you worship God when you go to Mass and receive the Eucharist?
- What does your soul hunger for?

Next Webinar: Eucharist and Recovery

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- Free for CIR+ members otherwise \$10 to register
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Sunday Mass Readings this Week

First Reading: 2 Kings 4:42-44

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 145:10-11, 15-16, 17-18

Second Reading: Ephesians 4:1-6

Gospel: John 6:1-15