

CLOSING PRAYER:

~ God of all Harvests ~

God of sun and God of rain,
In you, there is no dryness.
In you, no weed chokes the root.
No blight withers the leaf.
No frost bites at the blossom.

And so we pray for farmers
and their harvests everywhere.

In you,
seeds of tears
yield a bountiful harvest of joy.
May the rice farmer in Madagascar know
such bounty.

In you,
seeds of truth and courage
yield a bountiful harvest of justice.
May the coffee farmer in Honduras know
such bounty.

In you,
seeds of compassion
yield a bountiful harvest of wisdom.
May the cacao farmer
in the Philippines
know such bounty.

In you,
seeds of hope
yield a bountiful harvest of fulfillment.
May the vegetable farmer in Haiti
know such bounty.

In you,
seeds of love
yield a bountiful harvest
of forgiveness and reconciliation.
May the cassava farmer in Zambia know
such bounty.

In you,
seeds of the Gospel
yield the glorious harvest
that is our salvation.

God of all harvests,
bless all planters everywhere —
All who sow and all who gather,
All who nourish and all who weed,
All who thresh and bundle
and bring to market.

And bless all harvests.
Sprinkle your living water
on our fields,
on our relationships,
on our communities,
on our hearts.

And kiss us
with the light and warmth
of your undying sun.
May all our harvests
reflect the Harvest
that is yet to come.
Amen.

Our Lady Chapel



Our Lady Chapel is a Roman Catholic community founded in the love of the Father, centered in Christ, and rooted in the Holy Cross tenets of building family and embracing diversity. We are united in our journey of faith through prayer and sacrament, and we seek growth through the wisdom of the Holy Spirit in liturgy and outreach, while responding to the needs of humanity.

CAMPUS MINISTRY OFFICE:

The Campus Ministry Office is located in **Our Lady Chapel**.
phone: [440] 473-3560 [office] or 216-570-9276 [cell].

WORLD DAY OF GRANDPARENTS AND THE ELDERLY

Pope Francis has chosen a line from Psalm 71 -- "Do not cast me off in my old age" -- as the theme for the 2024 celebration of the World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly.

In a note announcing the theme for the day, which will be celebrated July 28, the Vatican said the choice was "meant to call attention to the fact that, sadly, loneliness is the bitter lot in life of many elderly persons, so often the victims of the throwaway culture."

Pope Francis celebrated the first World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly in 2021 and decreed that it be observed each year on the Sunday closest to the feast of Sts. Joachim and Anne, Jesus' grandparents.

As the Catholic Church prepares for the Holy Year 2025, Pope Francis has asked Catholics to focus on prayer, which is why he chose the prayer of an elderly person from the Psalms for the theme, the Vatican said in a statement released Feb. 15.

"By cherishing the charisms of grandparents and the elderly, and the contribution they make to the life of the Church, the World Day seeks to support the efforts of every ecclesial community to forge bonds between the generations and to combat loneliness," the statement said.

Cardinal Kevin J. Farrell, prefect of the Dicastery for Laity, the Family and Life, said the theme is a reminder "that, unfortunately, loneliness is a widespread reality, which afflicts many elderly people, often victims of the throwaway culture and considered a burden to society."

Families and parishes, he said, "are called to be at the forefront in promoting a culture of encounter, to create spaces for sharing, listening, to offer support and affection: thus, the love of Gospel becomes concrete."

"Our communities, with their tenderness and affectionate attention that does not forget its most fragile members, are called to manifest the love of God, who never abandons anyone," the cardinal said.

- VATICAN CITY Catholic News Service

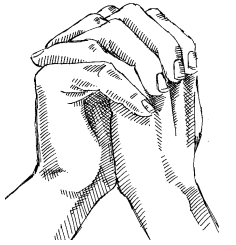


PRAYER REQUESTS:

Jesus calls us to pray for one another. Please keep all these people in your prayers.

PRAYERS FOR THE SICK:

- For John Zippay, family friend of Bernadette and Stephen Ritley, who is seriously ill.
- For Jill Thompson, who is undergoing treatment for mental health issues.
- For Mike Heryak, husband of Janet, father of Lillian ['09], Rosa ['12] and Edwin ['17] Heryak, who is seriously ill.
- For Debbie Langer, friend of Cindy Frimel, who was diagnosed with brain cancer.
- For Denise Marzano, who is battling liver cancer.
- For Nada Kucmanic, who is seriously ill from cancer.
- For Josephine Fernando, who is seriously ill.
- For Sean O'Toole, Gilmour Athletic Director, father of Owen ['18], Connor ['20], Kelsey ['24], and former Gilmour student, Erin, who is recovering from surgery.
- For Mary Vislosky, who is seriously ill as a result of bone cancer.
- For Brother Joseph LeBon, C.S.C., who is under the care of hospice.
- For Cathy Force, mother of Erika DiCello Lacroix ['90], Grandmother of Andre ['23] and AJ ['25] Lacroix, who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For Lawrence Wynn, Gilmour Strength and Conditioning Coach, who is recovering from surgery.
- For Brother Thomas Cunningham, C.S.C., who is seriously ill with various health issues.
- For Agnes Mirando, grandmother of David ['12], Agnes ['14], and Matthew ['25] Mirando, who is terminally ill.
- For Bob Willey, brother-in-law of Father John, who is undergoing medical treatment.
- For Chuck Campanella, father of AVI associate, Anthony Campanella, who is in rehab following medical treatment.
- For Linda McGraw, who is recovering from surgery.
- For Father James Rebeta, C.S.C., who is recovering from serious head injury
- For Barb Zachary, sister of Father Rick Gribble, C.S.C., who is undergoing treatment for cancer.



THE FEST IS COMING — NEXT SUNDAY:

Join us on **Sunday, August 4th for the FEST**. This year's diocesan family FESTival takes place on the grounds of the **Center for Pastoral Leadership, 28700 Euclid Ave, Wickliffe, OH 44092**. It's the perfect family day and an amazing one-take trip. Come and hear the best Christian artists [*Casting Crowns, We the Kingdom, Cochren & Co., and Caleb and John*] for FREE. There are activities, events, and fun for the entire family. The day also includes opportunities for prayer, Confession, and more. **Bishop Malesic and Bishop Woost** will bring the FEST day to a close with a beautiful outdoor Mass at 8 PM. This will be followed by an incredible American Fireworks display. This highlight of the summer — the perfect day of faith, family and fun — is all for FREE thanks to our sponsors [**Marc's, Sherwood Foods, Baron's Bus Lines, and the Diocese of Cleveland**]. Check out all the details by going to: www.theFEST.us. Mark your calendars and spread the word for the best day of the summer — the FEST.



FAITH EDUCATION REGISTRATION FOR FALL BEGINS:

All children who will be part of our Faith Education program need to register [even if you were a part of the program last year]. Our Sessions go from **8:45—9:45 AM, on Sunday mornings**, with the hope that our children would then participate in our **10:00 AM Family Mass**. Register your family by contacting **Patty in the Chapel Office [440-473-3560]**. Thank you for taking care of this important responsibility.



SERVING THE LORD IN THE POOR — AUGUST 17th:

Our Savior Lutheran Church — across the street from the Chapel — has a Food Pantry which distributes food to the community on **the third Saturday of each month**. They welcome volunteers. **On Saturday morning at 9 AM, they need help unloading the trailers and setting up items for distribution and preparing for the food pantry to open. It serves around 150 clients each time. The food pantry serves clients from 9:30 AM—1:30 PM on Saturday.**



Our Savior Lutheran's Food Pantry was formed to serve those in emergency situations and/or with on-going need in the cities of Mayfield Heights, Mayfield Village, Highland Heights and Gates Mills. The Food Pantry respects social and cultural diversity and upholds the worth and dignity of those it serves. All those in the area with need will be served equally, as supplies allow. The food pantry is a member of the Greater Cleveland Food Bank. Please join us for a great experience.

Please let us know in the chapel office [440-473-3560] if you would like more information or if you would like to help. This is a wonderful way to serve others. Please consider this opportunity.

PRAYER REQUESTS:

Jesus calls us to pray for one another. Please keep all these people in your prayers.

PRAYERS FOR OTHERS:

- For an end to political polarization.
- For an end to the war between Israel and Hamas.
- For an end to the war between Russia and Ukraine.
- For an end to violence as a means to resolve differences.
- For a greater respect for human life, from the moment of conception until natural death.
- For all caregivers.
- For all service men and women serving our country, and for their families.
- For a greater awareness of our call to create a more humane and just society.

PRAYERS FOR THE DECEASED:

- For Joe Toth, husband of Joyce, father of Jeffrey [‘84], James [‘86] Toth, and Jennifer Papczun [‘94], grandfather of Tim [‘24] and Kate [‘27] Papczun [anniversary]
- For Sue Pickerill, mother of Ginky Lennon.
- For Sister Catherine Britton, SSJ-TOSF, former President of Trinity High School
- For Sister Mary Anne Philomena Grady, S.N.D.
- For Father Thomas McDermott, C.S.C.
- For Sara Coyle, mother of Ellen Stanton [‘83] and Frank Coyle [‘84].
- For George Gabanic, uncle of Jeffrey [‘84], James [‘86] Toth, and Jennifer Papczun [‘94], great-uncle of Tim [‘24] and Kate [‘27] Papczun

ATTENDANCE:

If you attend Mass regularly here at Our Lady Chapel, it would be helpful if you filled out a Registration Form [name, address, phone number, children, etc.] indicating this fact, if you have not already done so. Such information not only helps us to know who is attending Our Lady Chapel; it also is of great assistance to us in record keeping [for our friend, the IRS] of any contributions which you may make.

ENVELOPES:

- When you need a **new supply** of envelopes, please feel free to take a supply of them from the table in the vestibule, or call Father John at the Campus Ministry Office [473-3560].
- When you **use** your envelope, please make sure that **your number** is on it. If you need to know your number, please call the Campus Ministry Office. Thanks.

WEEKLY OFFERING:

Baskets are located on the pillars just inside the center door when you enter the chapel. Please place your offering in the basket. Baskets will not be passed during the offertory time. Your offering will help offset chapel daily operating expenses. When you choose to use the envelopes, you can request a printout of your offerings for the year to submit to the IRS. God bless you.

Total Offerings: Saturday [7/20/24] ----- \$130.00
Total Offerings: Sunday [7/21/24] ----- \$424.00

NEXT BIBLE STUDY — WEDNESDAY, JULY 31st:

Our next Virtual Bible Study will be on Wednesday, July 31st at 6:30 PM. Bible Study continues to meet bi-weekly. The Bible Study is open to everyone — all middle and high school students, college students, young adults, and all adults. We will all come together to be enriched by God’s word. It’s a great time, and a good witness of our faith to others. If you can’t come at 6:30, come when you can. Gather your favorite snack and/or drink, but be prepared to be nourished on God’s word.



Our topic: The Spirituality of St. Ignatius

Mark your calendars and be part of this wonderful activity that will deepen your spiritual journey. **We will meet every other week — topic to be decided at the end of the previous meeting.** Join us. You’ll have a blast, and celebrate your faith along the way..

SCHEDULE FOR THE WEEK:

Sunday, July 28: 17 th Week in Ordinary Time	10:00 AM In-Person & Live Stream
Monday, July 29: Sts. Mary, Martha, & Lazarus	NO MASS
Tuesday, July 30:	NO MASS
Wednesday, July 31: St. Ignatius of Loyola	NO MASS
Thursday, August 1: St. Alphonsus Liguori	NO MASS
Friday, August 2:	NO MASS
Saturday, August 3: 18 th Week in Ordinary Time	5:00 PM In Person only
Sunday, August 4: 18 th Week in Ordinary Time	10:00 AM In-Person & Live Stream

ST. ADALBERT SCHOOL SUPPLIES:

Once again this year, we are assisting the students at St. Adalbert School with their school supplies. We have received a list of supplies which the children need. Here are their most requested items: **#2 Pencils, Pink Erasers, Crayons, Colored Markers, Glue, Single-Subject Spiral Notebooks & Loose-leaf Paper.** Here is how you can be a part of this outreach. Simply shop for items on the list. Kindly **return the items** whenever you come to Our Lady Chapel; we will have boxes in the narthex marked “St. Adalbert.” **If you do not have time to shop, simply place an envelope in the collection box and mark it “St. Adalbert’s” or drop it off in the Chapel office.** Together, we will work and plant our seeds of hope and goodness with their community. Thank you in advance for your generosity and helping the children of St. Adalbert! Contact Patty in the Chapel Office [440-473-3560] if you have any questions. We will be concluding our school supply drive by **Monday, August 5th.**



REFLECTION ON THE THEME FOR THE WEEK:

In the Eucharist, we celebrate God's desire to give us Life through the death of Jesus. Through the Resurrection, Jesus lives and walks our walk each and every time that we enter into the Eucharist. Do we receive and live faithfully and generously the very abundance of life that is ours?

We come with little, and we celebrate what God does with it. Let us pray that we resist the temptation to diminish our gift so that the little that we have may be transformed into ways of God's being present. The spirit of our world is filled with envy by which we fall to grumbling that we are not enough, have not enough, and will wait until we have more. That is not the way of the Lord.

In the Book of Genesis, we hear the desire of God for human beings to increase and multiply [Genesis 1:22]. In the Scripture readings for this 17th Week in Ordinary Time, we have the reverse — there is multiplication of bread in both and an increase in faith for the journey.

Elisha is a "holy man" and there is much going on in his life at this time. He has promised that a woman who has welcomed him often to her house will have a longed-for child; he has cured another child, and provided needed oil for a widow and her sons to use and sell. One of the more interesting events is the time when Elisha went back to his home and there was a great famine there. His fellow prophets were sitting around hungry. Elisha asked some servants to make a soup for them all. The servant went out, and while gathering herbs, the servant picked a wild vine which he put in the soup. Upon eating some, everyone began to experience sickness because of the poison herb. Elisha ordered that some grains be brought, and he threw them in the pot and all was well.

Today we hear about Elisha multiplying twenty barley loaves to feed one hundred people of the famine [2 Kings 4:42-44]. Elisha has to insist that his servant take the loaves and share them with the people — even though they do not appear to be enough. Elisha promises that there will be more than enough and there will be leftovers as God has promised. Elisha had received his blessing from God; he went around sharing it in plenty — a display of God's abundant goodness.

As we enter this 17th Week in Ordinary Time, we begin a four-Sunday reflection from John's narrative on Jesus' being the Bread of Life [John 6]. Here Jesus is both the provider and the provided. John's account begins as a follow-up to what we heard from Mark's Gospel last weekend — Jesus has pity on the crowd which is hungering for life. The crowd has followed Jesus and the apostles to a deserted place, and the journey there has rendered them hungry. All heaven is about to breakout if something isn't done. The apostles have not enough money to buy food for this crowd so that each could have even a little bit. There is a tension.

John's Gospel rides easily on these apparently impossible situations. Earlier in the Gospel, Jesus was at a wedding feast when the wine ran out [see John 2]. Another incident has Jesus seeking a drink, whereupon he is told that he doesn't have a bucket [John 4]. Now there is no bread [John 6:1-15]. Tension — what to do!!!! "We only have five loaves and two fish — what are these among so many?"

Again we have a wonderful display of God's being more than enough. Out of the tension and apparent impossibility, Jesus is the life-giver. It is late in the day, and the crowd is large. There is a young boy in the crowd with something — but obviously not enough. Jesus takes the bread and fish, gives thanks and gives the food to the multitude who experience satisfaction. What increases is the awareness that Jesus — because of these "signs" — is the "one who is to come."

What happens next is at the heart of John's gospel. The people want to make Jesus their King — they want to hang on. But Jesus slips away from them — he doesn't want their stomachs; he wants their hearts. It is not food for the stomach — important as this may be — that is the focus here; Jesus is



need to let the flow of our life play out so that we can understand the specific way that God is directing us and guiding us.

Kevin was twenty-five years old when his doctors told him that he had bone cancer and the only way he could survive would be to have his right leg amputated at the hip. He agreed to the procedure and it was successful. But it left Kevin an angry and depressed young man. He couldn't understand how life could be so unfair to take away his leg at such a young age. He bore a deep resentment against people who were well and had use of all of their limbs.

Luckily he found a skilled therapist who began to work with him, discussing the events of his life and using art therapy to allow his deeper emotions to emerge. Over a period of two years he began to make progress. He began to accept the loss of his leg and look for meaning in life. What he found was that he had a gift of sharing his experience with others who were undergoing similar losses. He was very good at that kind of sharing. The medical community began to know of Kevin's ability and began to ask him to visit some of their patients who had undergone a very serious disability.

On one occasion he was asked to visit a young woman about his own age who had just lost both of her breasts to cancer. She was so depressed that she found it difficult to speak to anyone. Kevin came to her hospital room in the middle of the summer wearing a pair of shorts that clearly revealed his artificial leg. But the woman would not even raise her eyes to address him because she was so embarrassed of her disfigurement. The nurses had left some music playing in the room and in an attempt to get her attention Kevin turned up the volume, removed his artificial leg and began dancing around the room with one leg, snapping his finger to the music. His response was so unexpected and bizarre that the young woman looked up and watched him in astonishment for a few moments and then began to laugh. "Man," she said, "If you can dance, I can sing." Through such experiences Kevin discovered a purpose and a direction in his life which he never had before.

After a number of years, he decided to meet with his therapist again to review his progress. When they got together and she opened his file, out fell a drawing that Kevin had made early in his therapy. He picked it up and realized what it was at once. It was one of the earliest drawings he made. His therapist had asked him to draw a picture of how he saw his body. He had drawn a large vase and then with a black crayon he had drawn a jagged crack down the center of that vase. Kevin remembered how his teeth were clenched in anger as he drew that crack and how hard he pressed with the crayon on the paper. For this crack represented to him how he was forever flawed, how his body was broken and no longer whole. He felt he could never live life fully again. Holding the picture now several years later, he said to his therapist: "You know, I don't think this picture is finished." "Really?" she said. And pushing him a carton of crayons suggested: "Why don't you finish it now?" Kevin took a yellow crayon from the box and began to draw broad lines of yellow emanating out from every area of that crack. Then he said to his therapist: "I now realize that it is from this crack that the light shines forth."

Kevin's experience reflects what we believe as Christians. For we believe that those things that attack us in life, those things that are unfair do not need to destroy us. We believe that with God's help we can find life even in the midst of death. We believe that with God's help even though we are wounded there will be enough strength, enough wisdom, enough hope for us not simply to continue, but to grow and to thrive. The choice, of course, is always ours. When things in life attack us, when we must face problems in our family, sickness, addiction, loss, we can receive those things either as a blow that ruins us forever, or with God's help see them as a crack from which in time the light will shine forth.

—taken from the writings of Father George Smiga, which appear on the internet



out Mark Hart's "Sunday Podcast", download an iPhone app, or subscribe to the *Magnificat* or *Daily Bread*. It takes five minutes to read while you brush your teeth. This will help you to listen better for what God is saying to you through scripture.

- **Listen.** Usually when the readings start, we tune out. But listen. God speaks to us personally through scripture. Listen for what God is trying to say to you through the four readings at Mass. Try to connect with specific phrases or words that jump out to you — "Be not afraid" or "But you will receive power." Sometimes the Lord gives us profound truths in small bites.
- **Participate.** Don't just go through the motions. Mass is meant for full participation. Engage the mind. When we pray the intercessory prayers — example: praying for Haiti. I actually imagine the people of Haiti in my mind to make it real. Engage your heart. Pray the prayers, experience the words you are saying. They are powerful and real. Engage the body. Open your mouth and sing! Extend your hands back to the priest when you say: "Peace also with you." Mass is a full body sport. Because our bodies and souls make up our one being, we engage the mysteries of God in and through our bodies.
- **Receive.** After you receive the Eucharist — the body, blood, soul and divinity of God. Allow yourself to just be absorbed in His presence in you. Calm your mind, listen for God's whisper, feel His love. That moment is the most intimate time you can spend with Jesus.

There are two things that happen at Mass — "Communio" and "Missa". These are two cool Latin words. "Communio" in Latin means communion — come to union. "Missa" is where the word Mass comes from and means to be sent out. Think of it like our lungs. We take in air — communion — and we breathe out air — sent. This is the process of our faith. We take in the word, prayer and the sacraments to fill and transform us. As we breathe in and receive God's love, we can go out and live God's presence in the world. This is what Mass is all about.

In the end, I still wish some of the priest's homilies were more relatable. I still wish my parish would break out with some cool praise and worship or Matt Maher music during Mass. And of course I still get distracted sometimes by the girl's cute shoes next to me and the many to-do lists running around in my head.

But regardless of the great preacher, or music, or my many distraction — it is Jesus Himself in the living mystery of the Eucharist that we seek. And if we engage and unite with Him on the altar, Mass will be more life-changing and life-giving than even the most exciting of ND football games.

—taken from the writings of Mary Bielski, a youth minister.

THE CRACK AND THE LIGHT:

There are times when life seems unfair. When someone we love is hurt, when we need to deal with a serious disease, when someone we trust betrays us, it is easy for us to say: "Why is this happening to me? I don't deserve this." The anger and the depression of those times leads to question our ability to continue. In those circumstances it is easy to doubt whether there is enough strength, enough wisdom, enough hope for us to go on. That is why John's Gospel is so important — because in the Gospel Jesus tells us that when God is active, and there is always enough [John 6:1-15]. God can find life in our darkest moments. If Jesus was able to feed five thousand people with a few barley loaves, then certainly we can count on God to be present in our time of need. But if we are to believe that and see that, we

inviting them to hunger for faith and eternal life.

And so begins a profound teaching by Jesus about food for the soul — an invitation to eat his flesh and drink his blood. These are indeed hard sayings. And in four weeks, we will hear Jesus ask His disciples why they have not left him because of these same teachings.

But for now, Jesus resolves the hunger-tensions of the crowd — and the apparent insufficiency of the apostles. Anyone who is a follower of Jesus will often be faced with this very same tension about their being so little in the face of such demands to increase the presence of Jesus and multiply His works. "I cannot give what I do not have," is a famous saying. We have humbling experiences of not having, and yet wanting to give more — more for family and friends and this world. Few of us, if any, feel sufficient for the relationships and tasks of love to which we are invited in our lives.

This very sense leads us down two parallel paths. We walk the walk of envy and comparing. We walk the slippery-slope of self-diminishment and negativity. "Satis" is the Latin word for "enough". "Facio" is the Latin word for "do". Satisfaction means we have "enough to do enough". And it is here that the tension arises — do we have enough to do the deeds of our true hearts and soul? Can we do those things which we really desire doing — which are the deepest expressions of who we are and our relationships with those we love?

We are never "enough".

During the Presentation of Gifts in the Eucharistic Liturgy — which is omitted now because of COVID — we are the "young person" from the Gospel story who has the "five loaves and two fish". Jesus takes them and gives "thanks" and then gives them back to us in the expression of His abundant love saying: "You are My Body and you are enough." Perhaps the most difficult thing to believe about this exchange is not that the bread and wine we offer is changed into His Body and Blood, but that we are changed into His Body and do His works — even though we judge ourselves not "Satis-facio".

Jesus fed so many with so little, and He continues to do this through us, with us, and in us in the unity of the Holy Spirit for at least as long as we continue to receive His sufficiency.

—edited from the writings of Father Larry Gillick, S.J., which appear on the internet

EUCCHARISTIC MINISTERS:

We are currently discerning a new group of Eucharistic Ministers who would undergo training within the next month. If you feel that the Lord is calling you to this ministry, we would be delighted to include you in that ministry here at Our Lady Chapel. Both adults and teens [must be a Senior in High School] are welcome to participate in this very special ministry. We are in need of ministers for both our Saturday evening and Sunday morning Masses. **Contact Father John or the chapel office [440-473-3560] if you feel called to this ministry.** We are always in need of Eucharistic Ministers.



WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE AN ALTAR SERVER or LECTOR?

We will resume our need for Servers due to the upcoming school year Masses. **Any student who is starting the 3rd grade [and up] is invited to become an Altar Server. Please give your name to Fr. John if you are interested.** You may begin over the summer months.

We are also looking for Lectors, both for the summer months and for the upcoming school year. **Any student who is in the 5th grade [and up] is invited to become a Lector. Adults are also welcome to join in our Lectoring ministry.**

These are both wonderful ministries — a great way to serve God and the faith community. If you would like to take advantage of these opportunities, **please give your name to Father John.** You do not have to attend Gilmour to be an Altar Server, Lector, or to be involved in any other Ministry at Our Lady Chapel. **Please call the Chapel office [440-473-3560].**

THE FIRST SUPPER:

With this weekend, our liturgy begins a five week focus on the 6th chapter of the Gospel of John — the chapter on the Bread of Life. That the Church should spend five weeks on John 6 demonstrates that this is one of the most important sections of the Gospels.

A little background. The Gospel of John was most likely the last Gospel completed, with the finishing touches being applied at the end of the first century. By then the primitive Church had developed a deep understanding of the Eucharist. This understanding is inspired by the Holy Spirit — as all scripture is inspired. The actions, discussions and even debates presented in John 6 reveal the depths of the Lord's Gift of Himself to us in the Eucharist and on the Cross — two aspects of the same salvific event.

John 6 begins with the multiplications of the loaves and fish [John 6:1-15]. Why is this miracle retold so often in the Gospels? There are two accounts of the multiplication in Matthew and Mark, one in Luke, and one in John. In each passage phrases are used that are repeated at the Last Supper — “He took, He blessed, He broke.” Each passage refers to God’s continual gift of the one food we need — the Eucharist.

Three elements are emphasized in John’s account of the multiplication to provide a deeper understanding of the Eucharist. These elements are the time of the multiplication, references to Psalm 23, and the gathering of the fragments that are left over.



The time of the multiplication. The Gospel of John places the multiplication of the loaves and fish at the time of the Passover. This isn't just a passing note. The Passover was the sacred meal of the Jews celebrating their freedom from slavery in Egypt and thanking God for His continual protection. In John’s Gospel, Jesus provided a meal at the Passover time. He would provide another meal during another Passover. Holy Thursday took place at the time of the celebration of the Passover. The Last Supper was really the First Supper of the new People of God. The food would no longer be the Passover lamb, but the Lamb of God. The people would eat the Body and Blood of the Lord. It would be a meal of deliverance from slavery — slavery to the devil, slavery to sin. It would be a meal that would provide freedom. It would be a meal that would celebrate the New Life of the Lord. So, from the very start, we know that John is speaking about more than loaves and fish. He is speaking about the meal of the Christian Community — the Eucharist.

Secondly, **Psalm 23**. “The Lord is my shepherd. There is nothing that I want. He leads me to green pastures, to safe waters. He restores my strength. He guides me along the right path for his names sake. Though I walk in the dark valley, I fear no evil. Your rod and your staff give me courage. You set a table before me, and my enemies watch. You anoint my head with oil, my cup overflows. Only goodness and love follow me all the days of my life and I shall live in the house of the Lord forever.”

In the feeding of the people, Jesus sees the needs of the people. He has them recline on the green grass, green pastures if you will. He restores their strength with his food. This is not just about loaves and fish. Jesus is performing a prophetic action. He provides the banquet Psalm 23 spoke of — the Banquet of the Lord. Those who eat this food will continue to eat it in the House of the Lord forever. When we receive communion, we share in the meal of the Kingdom of God. We are united to people throughout the world and throughout time who also share in this meal.

Picture yourself at table on Thanksgiving Day. Around the table are all your loved ones, including those who have passed on to the Lord many years ago. This is the Banquet of the Lord we share every time we receive communion.

The third element is **the recovery of the fragments that are left over**. Back in the days of the exodus from Egypt, the food that the people had brought with them ran out. They called upon Moses to give

A FULL CONTACT SPORT — WHY PARTICIPATE IN MASS:

Here in South Bend, people get pretty pumped over Notre Dame football. They dress in blue and gold, paint their faces, prepare food all night for the tailgates, and they even get up early. When the game starts, the crowd goes nuts! Cheers. Standing. Sitting. High fives to strangers you don’t know. We are fully engaged in the event. I wonder what would happen if we participated with the same heart and passion at Mass?

Let’s be honest. Mass — it’s boring, right? Growing up, that’s what I thought. In grade school, we went to weekly Mass, while wearing ugly, green, plaid uniforms, with an old lady playing the organ. At that point, I would rather watch paint dry.

It wasn’t until college that God smacked me over the head with a 2 by 4, and I learned what Mass really was. My friend, who was a theology major, sat down in the college cafeteria and said: “Mass is a sacrifice, Mary.” I grumbled back: “Yup, Mass is a sacrifice to go.” But for the next twenty minutes my friend began to unfold salvation history. He told me how the Jews had to sacrifice an unblemished lamb during Passover, and how Christ was the perfect Lamb for the new sacrifice of the Mass [see 1 Corinthians 5:7].

He walked me through the last supper leading to Jesus’ death on Calvary. He even pulled out his Bible and read John 6, where Jesus commands us to “Eat my flesh and drink my blood.” And the words at the last supper: “Do this in memory of me” [Luke 22:19].

“Do you know what is happening at the Mass, Mary?” he said. “The veils of heaven are lifted, and the offering given 2000 years ago on Calvary becomes present on the altar.” We — the church — offer ourselves at Mass as a living sacrifice back to God. And we receive His body and life, to be sent out into the world.

“What!????” I was so blown away I almost dropped my bowl of mac and cheese on the floor. Mass is a sacrifice!? How did I go through 14 years of Catholic education and never know what was happening at Mass? My eyes were opened that day.

That year in college was a year of great conversion. I fell in love. I began to listen to the words at Mass: “Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, have mercy on us”; “All the angels cry holy, holy, holy”. The mysteries of Mass came alive for me. I started reading early church history and Scott Hahn's book: *The Lamb's Supper*. I was forever changed.

Mass is not boring — it’s the most exciting mystical event we can encounter. But like a ND football game — or anything else in life — you get out of it what you put in. And Mass is not meant to be lived on the sideline — it is a full “heart-body-mind” contact sport. So here are some helpful tips!

- **Learn.** Take the time to learn about the Mass. What is happening and why. The incense and rituals are not there just “because” some old guys wanted to make your Easter Vigil as long and as painful as possible. Catholicism is a very sensual — as in we use our senses — religion. We use smell, sound and touch in the sacraments to encounter God. Why and How? Because the invisible God makes himself visible — the mystery of the incarnation. Through humanity and sacraments — through water, oil, and bread — God uses the visible world to reveal and encounter invisible mysteries. It’s pretty cool stuff, if you ask me!
- **Prepare.** Read the scripture readings before Mass. You can get them online — check



Kings 4:42-44]. Being left over did not mean lack of value. In the case of Jesus, even the smallest portion of bread has the greatest imaginable potential — it can become his very flesh. Out of God's great abundance, Jesus focuses on a single portion which he will use to give us Living Bread — his very Self.

—taken from the writings of Father Phil Bloom, which appears on the internet

INTERPRETING THE SIGNS:

Only one of Jesus' miracles is included in all four gospels — his extraordinary feeding of a huge crowd of people. It's narrated six times! Yet, as Scripture scholars constantly remind us: two [or more] evangelists can include the same passage in their works, yet use it to convey completely different theologies. Though every gospel bread miracle has something to do with the Eucharist, each writer concentrates on a different aspect of it.

Through this calendar year, up to this point, we've been methodically listening to Mark's gospel, appreciating how, passage after passage, he develops his insights about dying and rising with Jesus. Yet just when we reach the point in which he presents his ideas about how we accomplish our dying and rising in the Eucharist — his first bread miracle — we shift from Mark's theology to John's, this is truly a biblical “no-no.” Sadly what it will never allow us to hear Mark's take on this important miracle.

Mark focuses on the role of the disciples in feeding the crowd [Mark 6:34-44]; John zeros in on Jesus [John 6:1-15]. Jesus is the one who first notices the lack of food, and then, on his own, takes care of everyone's hunger. Jesus is totally in control of the situation. After all, from the very beginning “he himself knew what he was going to do.”

This is the image of Jesus that John almost always conveys — he usually pushes Jesus' humanity into the background, and displays his divinity front and center. That's why we can't compare Elisha feeding 100 people [2 Kings 4:42-44] with Jesus feeding five thousand. Besides, Elisha depends on God to pull off the feat, while Jesus — as God — does it on his own.

Yet perhaps the most important part of John's Gospel narrative is his insistence that this event — like all of Jesus' miracles — is a “sign.” What is implicit in the synoptics is explicit in John. No evangelist employs miracles willy-nilly. Each has a reason why he puts this particular miracle in this particular place. There's always something deeper in such passages than immediately meets the eye. For John — as for us — a sign is something which leads us to something else. If we don't reach the something else we won't understand what the sign was trying to convey.

The late Anthony de Mello often told the story of the Indian peasant who had a life-long dream of visiting Bombay. When his friends and fellow villagers eventually raised enough money to make such a trip possible, he was overjoyed. Yet he surprised everyone by returning from Bombay much earlier than expected. When his benefactors asked: “Did you actually see Bombay?” he assured them that he had. And when they inquired what Bombay was like, he eagerly responded: “It's green, about two feet long and a foot high, with big yellow letters, B O M B A Y.” Obviously, like many readers of the Scriptures, he had confused the sign with the reality beyond the sign.

We can't understand John's theology without understanding John's signs. For instance, the “twelve wicker baskets with fragments” can only refer to the Twelve Tribes of Israel. John is convinced that all Jews — like all Christians — could be fed by Jesus if they only permitted themselves to be fed by him. Of course, to appreciate John's signs we must have the same frame of mind which the Pauline disciple who wrote Ephesians had. We have to commit to “living in a manner worthy of the call we've received” [Ephesians 4:1-6]. Gospel signs are only for those committed to becoming other Christs. All others will stop at the city limits.

—taken from the writings of Father Roger Karban, which appear on the internet



them food. He prayed to God, and God provided manna [see Exodus 16]. When the people of Israel gathered the manna in the desert, they were told not to take more than they needed. And the left-over manna was not to be stored.

Jesus does the opposite. He tells his disciples to gather up the remains. Enough is left over to fill twelve baskets. Twelve is not a random number. There were 12 patriarchs, the sons of Jacob. There would be 12 apostles, the patriarchs of the New Testament. The Lord tells them to care for the food He provides. This does not just refer to not wasting the bread. The Eucharist which is not consumed during the Christian banquet is not to be thrown out. It is the Body of the Lord. It is to be saved for those who were not able to be present at His meal so they also can partake of his food. What we have here is the biblical basis for the preservation of the Eucharist in our tabernacles. The Eucharist is stored so those who cannot attend the feast might still receive the Lord's Body. It is kept in our tabernacles for them. It is also kept in the tabernacle for all of us to reverence this special presence of the Lord. We do this every time we come into Church and genuflect, and pray before the Blessed Sacrament. We do this when we pause after communion, and reflect on the One inside us.

These three elements emphasized by John in his account of the multiplication, the Passover, the fulfillment of Psalm 23, and the preservation of the fragments, remind us that God has provided a meal that is far greater than we could ever hope for, or even ever imagine. How great is our God? God is so great that he has found a way for all of us to attend the eternal Passover. How great is our God? God is so great that he leads us into his presence and feeds us his meal. How great is our God? He is so great that he has found a way for each of us to join the disciples at the Last Supper, or what is really the First Supper, the First Supper of the Kingdom.

We need to ask ourselves at communion time: “What am I doing? Am I just following the crowd?” Hopefully not. “Am I receiving some sort of blessing?” Hopefully, we realize that communion is much more than a blessing. What is it that I am doing when I receive communion? I am receiving the Food that God provides. Today we pray for a deeper appreciation, a deeper reverence for the great gift of Love that is the Eucharist.

—taken from the writings of Monsignor Joseph Pellegrino which appear on the internet

LOVE GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART:

Jesus' primary concern was to be obedient to his Father, to live constantly in his presence. Only then did it become clear to him what his task was in his relationships with people. This also is the way he proposes for his apostles: “It is to the glory of my Father that you should bear much fruit, and then you will be my disciples” [John 15:8]. Perhaps we must continually remind ourselves that the first commandment requiring us to love God with all our heart, all our soul, and all our mind is indeed the first. I wonder if we really believe this. It seems that in fact we live as if we should give as much of our heart, soul, and mind as possible to our fellow human beings, while trying hard not to forget God. At least we feel that our attention should be divided evenly between God and our neighbor. But Jesus' claim is much more radical. He asks for a single-minded commitment to God and God alone. God wants all of our heart, all of our mind, and all of our soul. It is this unconditional and unreserved love for God that leads to the care for our neighbor — not as an activity that distracts us from God or competes with our attention to God, but as an expression of our love for God who reveals himself to us as the God of all people. It is in God that we find our neighbors and discover our responsibility to them. We might even say that only in God does our neighbor become a neighbor rather than an infringement upon our autonomy, and that only in and through God does service become possible.

—Henri Nouwen



A SAVIOR RATHER THAN A KING:

After Jesus fed the five thousand, the crowd wanted to make him king [John 6:1-15]. They probably thought that with Jesus ruling over them, all their problems would be solved. Only a man like Jesus who could feed five thousand people with just five loaves of bread and two fishes would be able to put an end to hunger and poverty. Only a man like Jesus who could cure any illness would be able to banish sickness and suffering from the land. Only a man like Jesus who could get such great numbers of people to follow him could lead an uprising against the Roman Empire. This was the kind of “salvation” they wanted Jesus to bring — an end to everything that made their lives miserable and hard.

However, being an earthly ruler was not the reason the Father sent him. As Jesus says in John’s Gospel: “You should not be working for perishable food, but for food that remains unto eternal life.” Jesus knew that the five thousand people he fed would get hungry again. Those he cured would eventually get sick again and die. What Jesus wanted to give to Israel was something that no earthly king could give his people — something that would not only have a temporary effect for one nation but that would last forever and be offered to all people of every age. By dying on the cross and rising from the dead, Jesus showed what type of a king he was — one who could free us from our sins and give us everlasting life with him in heaven, where there is no more hunger, no more sickness, no more wars, and no more death.

Earthly kings rule over lands and territories by coercion — threatening force against all who would disobey them. Jesus, however, rules over the human heart through love. Jesus is the type of king who gets to the root of what is wrong with each of us and the whole world — namely, sin. He treats the rebellion in our hearts that steers us in the wrong direction, away from his love and into selfishness.

Jesus teaches us what it means to turn away from the sin that is the cause of so much misery in our world; to turn away from the violence which is the cause of so much war and murder; to turn away from the greed which leaves people poor and hungry. Because he is God and lives in each of us, Jesus is the type of king who can make an appeal directly to the human heart to stop hating and to start loving. No earthly king could know all his subjects by name and know all their needs or love them enough to die for each of them. Jesus is just such a king.

At the Eucharist, we gather to celebrate the everlasting gift of Jesus’ love — the bread of life and the cup of eternal salvation. No military victory could have won for us the freedom from sin that Jesus accomplished on the cross. No other miracle than the Eucharist could feed and satisfy the longing within us for God. What we celebrate every Sunday is precisely this — the freedom from sin and the everlasting life which God offers us in our Savior and King, Jesus Christ.

—taken from the writings of Douglas Sousa, which appears on the internet.

NOVENA TO BLESSED BASILE MOREAU:

Blessed Basile Moreau was the founder of the Congregation of Holy Cross, to which Fr. John and the Brothers at Gilmour belong. We have two booklets with Novenas to Blessed Basile Moreau. One is used for a personal intention or healing; the other is used when praying for the intention or healing of someone other than yourself. The Novenas were composed by Father Thomas Looney, C.S.C. Many have received blessings and healings through the intercession of Blessed Basile Moreau, and now we want to extend this invitation to you and your family. Please see Father John and he will be glad to give you the booklets.



Both of these approaches, in their best expressions, are predicated on some other things — feeding the hungry, as Jesus asks us to do it, involves a reduction in our own standard of living. To feed the hungry means to consume less ourselves, to do some fasting, and to live in a simplicity that puts us in more solidarity with the poor. Feeding the hungry also means prayer. We have some bad habits that only God can cure — and thus only the outside power of God can ultimately transform our world.

So which is the best approach? As Christians, our task is not to pick between being a Mother Theresa or a social justice advocate. The gospel asks us to be both. We need to work at transforming the conditions that create poverty even as we, like Mother Theresa, reach out personally, beyond the economics and social issues involved, to feed very individual poor people.

Jesus’ command to feed the hungry asks to become a Dorothy Day.

—taken from the writings of Father Ronald Rolheiser, O.M.I., which appear on the internet

SOME LEFT OVER:

When Mount St. Helen last erupted, it scorched 240 square miles — an area almost three times that of Seattle. The Forest Service decided not to replant trees, but simply observe how long it would take for life to return. Since the volcanic blast had virtually sterilized the area, some scientists considered it would take years and possibly decades for significant life to return. In spite of those pessimistic predictions, biologists were amazed at how fast life came back. Within a short time, that once barren area was teaming with plants and animals.

God has put a marvelous fertility into nature. We see that in the Book of Genesis. To each living group — vegetables, trees, insects, fish, birds, land animals and finally the human person — God gave the command to be fruitful and multiply. Nature itself reflects God’s exuberance. His abundance stands out even more when we look beyond the earth — a staggering number of galaxies, each one with not only an incredible number, but an unexpected diversity of stars and other bodies.

Out of his abundance God then narrows down his focus. Locating the earth within the cosmos would be like searching for a grain of pepper in the Pacific Ocean. The universe is an enormous frame for our planet — yet we know no other place with a similar ability to sustain life. On this relatively tiny globe an astonishing variety of life forms have emerged. Scientists estimate that we currently have anywhere from two million, up to a hundred million species — and even that enormous quantity represents less than a single percent of the species in earth’s history. Out of all those varieties, only one is capable of art, stories and jokes — the kind of intelligence which makes possible a freely chosen relationship. Every created thing reflects God in its own way, but God particularly focuses his attention on us humans.

In John’s Gospel, we see this pattern of abundance, followed by a deeper focus. Jesus stands before an enormous crowd — at least ten or twenty thousand people — if you figure that most of the 5,000 men were accompanied by a wife and a few children. Jesus provides an abundant meal for them — more than they could possibly eat. Not wishing anything to go to waste, they gathered twelve wicket baskets full of the substantial barley bread [John 6:1-15].

After this miracle of abundance, Jesus then focuses on the True Bread. We will hear about it during subsequent weekends. He will speak about bread becoming his very Flesh. As we shall see, the word “flesh” evokes a profound meaning in the Bible. But for now, let’s just focus on the abundance and the depth which Jesus makes possible.

The Old Testament prophet Elisha performed a miracle which foreshadows the Lord’s abundance. When Elisha offered to God the twenty barley loaves, it fed a hundred people “with some left over” [2



FEED THE HUNGRY:

A cynic once quipped: “What would you get if you crossed a radical liberal social justice advocate with a strongly conservative pious daily communicant?” The answer? — Dorothy Day! That’s a piece of wit which can serve to throw some light on how one might begin to live out the first corporal work of mercy — the command to feed the hungry.

How do we feed the hungry? Even if we are convinced — and perhaps even obsessed — by Jesus’ command to do this, how, in fact, can it be done today? The world is a big place, and millions upon millions of people live in hunger. Moreover we live a situation of compounded complexity of every sort — political, social, and economic. There is no simple way to get resources from the rich to the poor, or from your table to the table of someone who is hungry. How can you live out Christ’s command to feed the hungry, given the complexities of today’s world?

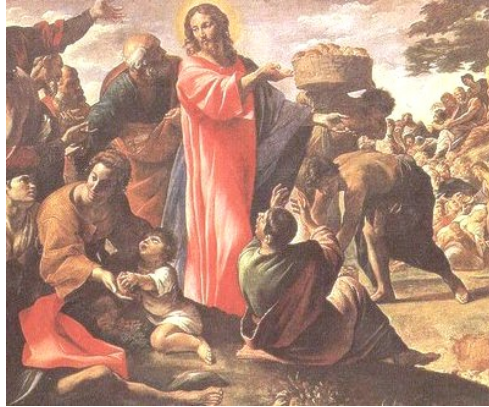
Generally speaking — rightly and wrongly — we look to our governments, to the United Nations, relief organizations, social services, welfare, and other such agencies to do this for us. Given the scope and complexity of poverty and hunger in the world, the tendency is to look over our shoulders — to something massive, to some big government or agency — to feed the hungry. We tend to feel too small and individually over-powered in the face of hunger’s enormity.

But this can be, and invariably is, a rationalization — an abdication, a way of escaping Jesus’ command. Ultimately we cannot use the excuse that things are too complicated, that we are too small and powerless, and that only huge organizations can do anything for the hungry. The Gospel call to feed the hungry is uncompromising and eminently personal. Each of us is called upon personally to do something real and this must be something beyond the normal corporate things we are involved in, paying taxes and giving charity monies to governments and big agencies to enable them to do this for us. We must do something ourselves.

But what more can we do concretely? How can you and how can I feed the hungry?

There are a couple of possible approaches. Mother Theresa takes one approach. For her, Jesus’ command is simple and clear. Each of us should personally — beyond government and other agencies — reach out concretely and touch some poor person or persons. There should be times when we are, literally, taking food to hungry people, working in soup kitchens, giving aid to individual street people, and having a poor person eat at our table. This approach is individual, personal, and concrete. Each poor person has a face, and one does not — at least not all the time — ask questions regarding where this person will eat tomorrow or what social problems are causing this hunger. In this view, the demand that we feed the hungry challenges us precisely to reach out beyond ideologies and social theories — and irrespective of social structures — like the Good Samaritan, person-to-person, to take food to the hungry.

But there is another approach — more abstract, though not less critical. In this view, it is less important to feed this or that individual person on a given day than it is to change the social, political, and economic structures that are responsible for that particular person being hungry. This approach is less personal and it is slower, but it can, at the end of the day, be more far-reaching. In it, one attempts to feed the hungry by involving oneself in social justice groups that are trying to change the conditions that produce poverty.

**GOD MULTIPLIES WHAT WE SURRENDER TO HIM:**

What is God calling me to give? Where does He want to send me to find the hungry and the suffering? Who needs to hear me witness about my faith? What would it take for me to really surrender my time, treasure, and talents to His service?

It does not take much to do good, to relieve suffering, or to show love. Consider the example of St. Teresa of Calcutta. When she began her ministry among the poor, she had nothing. She started her order with no master plan or endowment. Rather, she walked the streets, feeding the hungry, and caring for the sick with whatever resources she could muster. She gave the little she had, and through her generosity and holiness, she touched hearts and changed lives.

One day, she came upon a homeless man dying in the gutter. With the help of some men, she brought him to her home. There she washed him, prepared a small meal for him, and prayed. For three hours she did nothing but sit with him. He looked up at her and said: “My whole life I have been treated like an animal, now I will die like an angel.” She was not able to give him much — just her time and her love — but it meant that, in his final hours on earth, instead of dying in the streets, he could die in the arms of a saint.

In the Gospels, Jesus never turns away those in need. Whether they have a question, whether they need healing or whether they are hungry, He gives them what He has, and it never fails to satisfy. The story about the multiplication of the loaves and fish is a case in point. The five barley loaves and two fish would not have been enough to feed the apostles, never mind a throng of five thousand. Yet Jesus refused to keep the food to Himself. Rather He took it, blessed it and gave it away. That small act of generosity was enough to satisfy a hungry mass of people with plenty left over [John 6:1-15].

It is a spiritual law that God uses those who have the least ability to do His work. We often say: “If you want to get something done, ask a busy person.” Well, when God wants to get something done, He asks a poor person. By choosing those who are weak, deprived and even sinful, our Heavenly Father makes it clear that it is He who is at work. Otherwise we might chalk the good deeds up to the cleverness or resourcefulness of those who do them rather than the God who makes all things possible.

God wants to do great things in our families, parishes, and communities. He wants to feed the hungry, He wants to console the suffering and He wants to change hardened hearts. But He needs us to help Him. He needs us to give even when we think we have too little, to work even when we feel exhausted, and to open our mouths even when we think we have nothing to say. We need to take risks as St. Teresa of Calcutta did by ministering to those dying on the streets and as the boy in the Gospel did who gave his basket of food to Jesus. When we do that, when we step outside our comfort zone in faith, God will take care of the rest.

—taken from the writings of Douglas Sousa, which appear on the internet.

READINGS FOR THE WEEK:

Monday:	1 John 4:7-16, John 11:19-27
Tuesday:	Jeremiah 14:17-22, Matthew 13:36-43
Wednesday:	1 Corinthians 10:31-11:1, Luke 14:25-33
Thursday:	Romans 8:1-4, Matthew 5:13-19
Friday:	Jeremiah 26:1-9, Matthew 13:54-58
Saturday:	Jeremiah 26:11-16, 24 Matthew 14:1-12

18th Week in Ordinary Time: Exodus 16:2-4, 12-15, Ephesians 4:17, 20-24, John 6:24-35

THE GREAT GIFT OF THE EUCHARIST

This Sunday we begin the deep dive into the Sixth chapter of the Gospel of John. This is the chapter on the Eucharist. John 6 begins with the multiplication of the loaves and fish. What again? The multiplication of loaves and fish is the only Gospel miracle found in all four gospels and is actually found twice in the Gospels of Mark and Matthew. So, we come upon it quite frequently in our liturgies.

This Sunday's reference to the loaves and fish is an introduction to the gospel's teaching on the Bread of Life. Everything in this account has particular meaning. Jesus goes up a mountain to teach just as instructions from Moses and Elijah came from a mountain. The feast of Passover is near. Jesus provides physical food here, but on another feast of Passover he will provide the Bread of Life. Jesus has the people recline on the grass like the sheep led to verdant pastures in Psalm 23. After the people eat, Jesus has his disciples gather up the remnants of the bread. They fill up twelve wicker baskets. There were twelve tribes of Israel. There would be twelve apostles of the New Israel.

I want to focus in on the gathering of the fragments. Unlike the manna, the fragments were not to be thrown away. They came from God. This happens in our churches every time we celebrate Mass. Bread and wine are consecrated, not blessed, but consecrated. They become the Eucharist, the Body and the Blood of the Lord. Once the physical elements are transformed, they remain the Body and Blood of the Lord. We place the consecrated hosts in our tabernacles because this is still the Lord. We bring the Body of Christ to those who cannot join us at Mass. We pray before the Body of Christ in our tabernacles. The Eucharist is not merely a liturgical action during the Mass. It is Jesus. He is really present in the consecrated species, the bread and wine.

There are times that people will leave the Catholic Church for another nonCatholic denomination. If I am approached about this, I always tell them that they may have their reasons for leaving the Church, but they are leaving the Eucharist. At least as we understand the Eucharist as the Real Presence of the Lord. Many times these people will say, "No, they have communion services in this or that denomination." Yes, but that is not the real presence of the Body of Christ. These denominations celebrate a symbolic action of unity with each other and with the Lord, but they do not believe that the bread and wine themselves become the Body and Blood of the Lord. That is why they do not have tabernacles. There is no reason for them to save that which they only recognize as bread after the service. We respect their faith, but we also recognize that what we believe is different than what they believe. We believe that this is really and truly the Body and Blood of Christ. To leave the Catholic Church for another faith is to reject the gift of the real presence of Jesus Christ as Eucharist. Once a person is brought into the mystery of the Eucharist, that person cannot leave this mystery. It would be a rejection of a great Grace given when that person became Catholic or entered that stage of life when he or she could come to an understanding of the what we Catholic believe about the Eucharist.

How great is our God? God is so great that he has found a way for all of us to attend the eternal Passover. How great is our God? God is so great that he leads us into his presence and feeds us his meal. How great is our God? He is so great that he has found a way for each of us to join the disciples at the Last Supper, or what is really the First Supper, the First Supper of the Kingdom.

How great is our God? He is so great that He has created billions and billions of people in the world, and, yet, has found a way to treat each person as an only child. How great is our God? He is so great that He loves every person as though each of us were the only person He ever created.

When we receive communion, we are present at the Last Supper, the First Supper, the Banquet of



the Lord. When we receive communion we enter into the intimate union with God that Jesus came to earth to provide.

How much our God cares for us! He has found a way to nourish our spiritual lives. His very Body and Blood keeps us strong. He gives us the strength to proclaim his Kingdom.

We need to ask ourselves at communion time: "What am I doing?" Am I just following the crowd? Hopefully not. Am I receiving some sort of blessing? Hopefully, we realize that communion is much more than a blessing. What is it that I am doing when I receive communion? I am receiving the Food that God provides. I am being nourished with the Body and Blood of Christ.

Today we pray for a deeper appreciation and a deeper reverence for the Great Gift of Love that is the Eucharist.

- taken from the writings of Rev. Msgr. Joseph A. Pellegrino, which appear on the internet.

POSITIVE OR NEGATIVE?

In John's version of the feeding of the multitude [John 6:1-15], Jesus asks Philip where they can buy enough food to feed the large crowd that was coming to him. Philip replies, in essence, that they do not have enough money to buy even a little food for each one. Andrew chimes in that a boy there has five barley loaves and two fish, but what good are these for so many. Jesus then takes the loaves, gives thanks and distributes them; he also shares the fish. After the crowd ate as much as they wanted, Jesus has the disciples gather up the leftovers — they fill twelve wicker baskets. Seeing the sign that Jesus did, the crowd identifies him as the Prophet who is to come, and wants to make him king. But Jesus withdraws to the mountain alone.

Perhaps we could let this remarkable sign prompt reflection on two different approaches to the challenges of life. One is represented by Philip and Andrew who are focused on what they do not have — not enough money and not enough food. Some of us may find ourselves adopting this "not enough" approach, focused on what we don't have. I do not have enough time for prayer in my busy schedule. I don't have the energy to exercise regularly. I don't know enough to vote intelligently. I don't have enough inner strength to forgive her. I don't have enough faith to overcome my doubts. Recognizing limitations can be a healthy response to the realities of life, but an excessive concentration on what we do not have can be self-limiting: curtailing creativity; settling for mediocrity; missing opportunities; underestimating the power of God's grace.

Jesus instructs us in another approach to life. He focuses not on what they don't have but on what they do have — five loaves and two fish, which ends up feeding thousands of people. The suggestion is that we can grow spiritually and be more effective disciples by concentrating less on what we do not have and more on the resources at our disposal.

We can imagine individuals rising above their limitations and following Christ's example. A plumber working a lot of overtime still finds time to pray each day. A senior citizen with limited energy still does his doctor-recommended exercise routine each day. A divorced woman, cooperating with God's grace, forgives her self-centered ex-husband. A grad student votes for the first time after reading an abridged version of the American bishops' *Faithful Citizenship*. A teacher with many doubts about Church doctrines remains a faithful Christian disciple by drawing on her core conviction that Jesus is the parable of the Father and exemplar of full humanity.

What resources do you have that can help you be a more committed and effective follower of Christ?

—taken from the writings of Father Jim Bacik which appear on the internet

