

## 18<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time

### Homily

This miracle, known as the Multiplication of the Loaves and Fishes, is the only miracle of Jesus that is recorded in all four gospels, so we know that it must have been especially important to the early Church. That makes it especially disheartening that many people today — including many Christians — don't believe it to be true.

It's been called by some a "miracle of sharing." Supposedly the people in the crowd had more than enough food to eat among themselves. They were just being selfish with it. The "miracle", according to this interpretation, was that Jesus inspired them to share their food with one another. How people arrive at such an interpretation from the words as they appear in our Bibles and which we've just heard proclaimed, I really don't know.

The "caring and sharing" reinterpretation seems to have more to do with a certain political agenda than with reading a Gospel story as it is written — an agenda that is suspicious of private property and favours a redistribution of material goods from the rich to the poor. Absolutely nothing wrong with sharing and generosity of course — love of God and love of our neighbour is at the heart of Christ's teaching; the rich or relatively rich ought to behave responsibly with the use of their wealth - but to reshape the miracles of Jesus to fit a socialist, or any, political agenda, is wrong. It is obvious from the text that each account of the feeding of the thousands was intended by the gospel writers to report a *divine miracle*, not a parable about sharing. The abundance produced was produced by *God*, not by man. Our inadequate offerings, represented by the five loaves and two fish, *are* important, but it is **God** who produces the abundance.

Why do we think the five thousand were gathered there in the first place? They had already seen Jesus perform miracles and it got their attention. They were hungry, not just for bread, but for truth and for holiness - for the divine. And that is exactly what Jesus offered them.

And it is what he still offers us. He offers us himself. Jesus comes to us, offering to heal us and to feed us. He offers us something much greater than barley loaves and fish. He offers us the bread of life, the bread of angels, his own divine flesh in the Eucharist. He offers us a miracle. The miracle of the feeding of the multitudes prefigured the Eucharistic meal, where we offer what little we have to God, however inadequate, and he in turn gives us grace and life in superabundance.