

# Connecting with the Sunday Readings

Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time    Gospel Word  
John 6:1-15

This Sunday takes us from the Gospel according to Mark to the Gospel according to John, and immediately we are present to witness one of the more impressive signs of the Gospel according to John: the miraculous feeding of the five thousand. Here's a clue that helps us in interpreting the Gospels: whenever food is served, many other important things are going on. Pay attention.

There is no account of the institution of the Eucharist in the Gospel according to John. The ritual described during the Last Supper in this Gospel is the washing of the feet and not the breaking of the bread. It's here that we find John's mention of the Eucharist. It starts with the feeding of the five thousand. Notice the words chosen to describe the beginning of this meal. Jesus took the bread, blessed it, and had it distributed to the people. In a few more verses, Jesus will say that he is the bread of life and some will accept his message and some will turn away.

Scholars like to point out that there are two references to abundance in the story. First, there is the abundance of the crowd. Five thousand people would be huge for the times. Five thousand of anything would be worth noticing. Second, there is the abundance of food that was served. Everyone had their fill from the five loaves and two fish and there were leftovers—twelve baskets filled to the brim with bread! Apparently all the fish were eaten. Between the lines of this story is the deeper story of God's abundant love. It will always be more than enough.

—by David Thomas, PhD, Co-Director, The Bethany Family Institute

## Living the Word

One of the lessons of today's Gospel reading is that God will provide all that we need, even when we are on a distant mountain, far away from home. The message calls for us to trust that God will be generous in providing for us. Of course, God will usually use others as part of our story. Here, it's a boy who just happened to have enough to start the meal. God did the rest. Sometimes God calls us to be the feeders. This, too, is a miracle.

Food, especially bread, is also a symbol for life itself. So another meaning of the Gospel message is that we are to share our lives, our time, and our energy with others. Just as Jesus came to give his life for us, we are called to be life and give life to others. That's one of the most basic truths of our faith. It is at the heart of what it means to be a Christian. All are invited to God's banquet of life. But you have to come and take your seat at the table. You will not be forced. We were not created to be hungry. At the same time we are called to be bread of life for others. So sometimes we come to the banquet as servants and sometimes we come as guests. Which will you be this week?

## One-line Prayer

God of abundance, give us this day our daily bread.  
Amen.