

The Gospel of John; Chapter 6: 1-14

Fr. John Behr Notes:

- Chapter 6 contains Passover themes found in Exodus and Numbers
- Jesus is on the Mountain (6:3) as Moses was on Mt. Sinai
- The Passover (6:4) – the second of three mentions of the feast by St. John (John 2:13 – Christ in the Temple & the passion of Christ (9:14-42)
- The question about where to get food (6:5) – Numbers 11:13 (Whence should I have flesh to give to so great a multitude? they weep against me, saying: Give us flesh that we may eat.)
- The fish (6:9) – Numbers 11:22

¹After these things Jesus went away across the Sea of Galilee, which is *the Sea* of Tiberias.

²And a great crowd was following Him, because they had been seeing the signs which He brought about upon those who were sick.

Chrysostom: “For miracles, it says, are not for believers but for unbelievers.” See, I Cor. 14:22 – “Therefore tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe, but to the unbelievers; and prophecy is not for the unbelievers, but to those who believe. [1 Cor. 14:22]

³And Jesus went up into the mountain, and there He was sitting with His disciples. ⁴And the passover, the feast of the Jews, was near. ⁵Then Jesus, having lifted up *His* eyes and having beheld that a great crowd was coming toward Him, said to Philip, “From what place shall we buy loaves, that these might eat?” ⁶But this He was saying putting him to the test, for He knew what He was about to do.

Augustine: Matthew 14 records what happened before this, the disciples ask Jesus to send away the crowds and He replies that they do not need to depart and He asks them to give them something to eat. What was not recorded is shared here by St. Joh, then Jesus puts Philip to the test.

Theodore of Mopsuestia: “Indeed, He first kept Philip in doubt and difficulty because of the shortage of food, but then, when Philip would see the miracle accomplished, he would learn that everything must always be committed to God...”

Cyril of Alexandria: “Just because we are powerless to achieve accomplish anything, we should not allow God to be accused by our inability to understand how He will accomplish things beyond our understanding...What then is beyond our comprehension is received by faith and not by investigation.”

⁷Philip answered Him, “Loaves worth two hundred denarii (200 days labor) are not sufficient for them in order that each of them might take a little.” ⁸One of His disciples, Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, said to Him, ⁹“There is one little boy here who has five barley loaves and two small fish; but what are these for so many?”

- ❖ We usually rationalize dilemmas first and then once we exhaust the options look to answers through faith.

- ❖ Jesus is intentionally teaching His disciples about Divine Providence
- ❖ Cyril of Alexandria – 5 loaves – the 5 books of Moses and the 2 fish – the preaching of the Apostles and Evangelists.
- ❖ Augustine: the difference between wheat and barley – Barley is difficult to get to the kernel; it is clothed with a husk that must be stripped away with effort (like the 5 books of Moses). The boy represents Israel carrying the books of Moses with a childlike understanding, not eating them himself.

Romanus the melodist: “You are mistaken if you do not know that I am the Creator of the universe; I provide for the world...I myself shall cure their hunger, for I am the heavenly bread of immortality...I alone, as Creator take thought for all. And I provide every kind of food for all people...I fed Israel in the desert, I gave them bread from heaven; In a region without water I made water to flow from a rock...Since I am the heavenly bread of immortality.”

¹⁰And Jesus said, “Make the people recline.” Now there was much grass in the place (*It was clearly spring before the Passover*). Then the men reclined, *in number about five thousand*. ¹¹And Jesus took the loaves; and after He gave thanks, He distributed *them* to the disciples, and the disciples to those reclining; and likewise of the fish, as much as they wished.

Hilary of Poitiers: “The bread also is given to the apostles, because it is through them the gifts of divine grace are to be given...And the abundance of the divine goodness, kept in reserve for the people of the Gentiles, has overflowed from the source of eternal food unto the filling of the twelve apostles. And the number of those who ate are the same as that of those who were to believe (On the day of Pentecost 5,000 heard and believed).”

Saint Bede: “In giving to the apostles the gifts of spiritual understanding, He wishes that the food of life should be distributed to the Church throughout the world by their ministry. That He broke the loaves which He gave to His disciples signifies the revelation of the sacraments by which the world was to be nourished unto life eternal. Also, the uninstructed have looked for the food of the word of God, that being fed on it they might have the strength to do good works. But for want of teachers there was no one to open to them the hidden things of the Scriptures and to lead them along the way of truth. The Lord, receiving the loaves that He might break them, gives thanks, that He may show how greatly He rejoices over the salvation of mankind, and also to teach us that we should give thanks to God at all times, either when our bodies are fed with earthly bread or when our souls are fed with heavenly grace from above.”

¹²And when they were filled, He said to His disciples, “Gather together the fragments which remain over, that nothing might be lost.” ¹³Therefore they gathered *them* together, and filled twelve baskets *with* fragments from the five loaves of barley which remained over to those who had eaten. ¹⁴Then the people, having seen what sign Jesus did, began to say, “This is truly the Prophet Who cometh into the world.”

“For every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from Thee, the Father of Lights, and unto Thee do we ascribe glory, thanksgiving, and worship: to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. (Liturgy of Chrysostom).”

