

The Gospel we just heard about Jesus feeding the 5000, is one that most of us are probably familiar with. And there are numerous commentaries on this passage that I have heard over the years, some of them better than others. Many of you have probably heard the homily where this miracle is reduced to sharing. It goes something to the effect of when the Jesus had the boy share his food, others did likewise, and suddenly everyone was sharing their food and there was enough for everyone to eat.

Now, while I'm pretty sure that our Lord and savior does not have a problem with sharing our resources, and in fact is probably all for it, when we reduce this Gospel miracle to a miracle of sharing I think we lose something. It shows a weakness of faith on our part, because we don't believe that Jesus could actually have worked a real miracle, and instead worked a minor miracle by getting people to share. But St. Cyril of Alexandria, one of the Early Church Fathers, has this to say about weakness of faith. "Smallness of faith is the worst sickness and surpasses all evil. If God works or promises to do anything, then let it be believed in simple faith. Just because *we* are powerless to accomplish anything, we should not let God be accused our inability to understand how he will accomplish things beyond our understanding."

I think St. Cyril is on to something. We can't allow our deficiencies, our inability to work miracles, or our inability to understand how miracles are performed to place limits on our faith. Instead, we should trust God, and trust the Word of God encountered in the Gospel. So trusting that this miracle is not explained away by claiming that Jesus simply got people to share, what does this gospel tell us?

Well, here we can turn to another Saint, Saint Romanus Melodus, a 6th Century Byzantine saint. . St. Romanus says that when the disciples come to Jesus and say "how can these five loaves be sufficient?" Jesus' response is, "You are mistaken if you don not know that I am the Creator of the universe; I provide for the world; I know clearly what these people need...I myself shall cure their hunger." This interpretation tells us a lot more about this miracle story.

It begins by showing us that this story is a manifestation of God and God's power. Unlike the sharing interpretation, this understanding does not fool us into believing that we can solve our own problems. Instead it begins by noting that what we bring to the table is grossly insufficient. There are five loaves of bread and two fish, what good is that when there are 5000 hungry mouths to feed?

And yet, what is insufficient for humanity, is not insufficient for God. God can work with our insufficiencies. Not only that, God can take what is insufficient, and turn it into a superabundance. That, brothers and sisters, is indeed the Good News we hear today. The good news is that this miracle shows us that its not us who will make everything perfect. It is God. And we need to let him do that. And that is really important, so let me say that again - We need to let God turn our insufficiencies into a superabundance.

Now, what this means is that while we don't have to do everything ourselves, what we do need to do is allow God to work. And we hear that in the Gospel today. It is a subtle but powerful line - 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.

Notice that the men did not go hunting. They didn't help with the grill. No, they reclined and allowed God to work. That is what we need to do. If we want God to take what is insufficient for us, and turn it into a superabundance, we need to let God work with us, because it is only God who can take our deficiencies and turn them into a superabundance.

We do this in many ways. We do it today at this Eucharist. Did you catch how Eucharistic this Gospel is? Jesus took bread, gave thanks and distributed it, just as we will do in a few minutes. And all of us, will be like the 5000 men, who recline, and receive God. And here's a little Catechetical aside, this is why we receive the Body and Blood of Christ as opposed to stepping up and grabbing it from the ministers of communion. It is symbolic of our receiving from Christ, allowing him to nourish us. So please don't go grabbing the Eucharist, but receive it. That way I'll know you were paying attention to the homily.

After we receive the Eucharist, after we receive God into our very bodies, it should bring about a change. We should be spiritually nourished - nourished to the point that our spirit is overflowing, that there is an abundance, no a superabundance of faith. And then we have to listen to Jesus' command not to let the superabundance go to waste. Just as the green movement encourages us not to waste our material resources, Jesus tells us not to waste our spiritual gifts. Instead they should be gathered, so that they can be wisely used. Brothers and sisters, if you leave here today and never speak of this Eucharistic experience, the encounter you had with Christ today, you are wasting your spiritual resources. Pass on what you have learned. Talk to your friends, family and co-workers about your faith life, so that nothing from this Eucharist is ever wasted. This is where sharing comes in. But, what is to be shared, is not what *we* bring to the table, but what God has done with our insufficient offering. So share *that* with others. Don't allow the superabundance God has worked with your own insufficiencies go to waste.