

**GOSPEL**

LUKE 9:11-17

Jesus made the crowds welcome and talked to them about the kingdom of God; and he cured those who were in need of healing.

It was late afternoon when the Twelve came to him and said, 'Send the people away, and they can go to the villages and farms round about to find lodging and food; for we are in a lonely place here.' He replied, 'Give them something to eat yourselves.' But they said, 'We have no more than five loaves and two fish, unless we are to go ourselves and buy food for all these people.' For there were about five thousand men. But he said to his disciples, 'Get them to sit down in parties of about fifty.' They did so and made them all sit down. Then he took the five loaves and the two fish, raised his eyes to heaven, and said the blessing over them; then he broke them and handed them to his disciples to distribute among the crowd. They all ate as much as they wanted, and when the scraps remaining were collected they filled twelve baskets.

The Gospel of the Lord.

**A REFLECTION  
BY POPE FRANCIS**

Today, in Italy and in other countries we celebrate the Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ, Corpus Christi. The Gospel presents us the narrative of the miracle of the loaves which takes place on the shores of the Sea of Galilee. Jesus is intent on speaking to the thousands of people, performing healings. As evening falls, the disciples approach the Lord and say to him: "Send the crowd away, to go into the villages and country round about, to lodge and get provisions". The disciples too were tired. In fact, they were in a remote place, and the people had to walk and go into the villages in order to buy food. And Jesus sees this and responds: "You give them something to eat". These words astonish the disciples. They do not understand; perhaps they even become angry and they reply: "We have no more than five loaves and two fish — unless we are to go and buy food for all these people".

Instead, Jesus invites his disciples to carry out a true conversion from the mind-set of 'everyone for themselves' to that of

sharing, beginning with that little that Providence puts at our disposal. And he immediately demonstrates that he is quite clear about what he wants to do. He tells them: "Make them sit down in companies, about fifty each". Then, taking the five loaves and two fish in his hands, he addresses the heavenly Father and utters the prayer of blessing. Next, he begins to break the loaves, divide the fish and give them to the disciples, who distribute them to the crowd. And the food does not end until everyone has had their fill.

This miracle — a very important one, so much so that it is recounted by all the Evangelists — demonstrates the Messiah's power and, at the same time, his compassion: Jesus has compassion for the people. Not only does that prodigious gesture endure as one of the great signs of Jesus' public life, but it also foretells what will be, in the end, the memorial of his sacrifice, namely, the Eucharist, the sacrament of his Body and his Blood offered up for the salvation of the world.

The Eucharist is the culmination of Jesus' entire life, which was a single act of love toward the Father and brothers and sisters. There too, as with the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves, Jesus took the bread in his hands, raised a prayer of blessing to the Father, broke the bread and gave it to his disciples; and he did the same with the cup of wine. But in that moment, on the eve of his Passion, with that gesture, he wished to leave the Testament of his new and eternal Covenant, a perpetual memorial of the Paschal Mystery of his death and resurrection. The feast of Corpus Christi invites us to renew each year the wonder and joy of this wondrous gift of the Lord which is the Eucharist. Let us receive it with gratitude, not in a passive, habitual way. We should not grow accustomed to the Eucharist and go to Communion as a habit: no! Each time we approach the altar to receive the Eucharist, we must truly renew our "amen" to the Body of Christ. When the priest says "the Body of Christ", we say "amen": but let it be an "amen" that comes from the heart, a committed one. It is Jesus; it is Jesus who saved me; it is Jesus who comes to give me the strength to live. It is Jesus, the living Jesus. But we must not become accustomed: each time as if it were the first Communion.

Processions with the Most Holy Sacrament, which are taking place throughout the Catholic Church during this Solemnity, are expressions of the eucharistic faith of the holy People of God. May Our Lady help us to faithfully and lovingly follow Jesus whom we adore in the Eucharist.

**REFLECTION QUESTIONS**

- At the start of this reading we hear how Jesus made the crowds welcome. What should we as individuals and as a Church be doing to also 'make the crowds feel welcome'?
- In this story, Jesus called on the disciples to be active, to do something practical, and then God adds his miraculous power to do something unbelievable. How might God be calling you to contribute to something that is seemingly impossible, so that the power of the Holy Spirit can come into play?
- What is it in your life that you offer to Jesus and ask him to bless? Like the food offered this story, what can you offer that God can bless and increase?

**PRAYER**

*Spend some time in prayer  
with one another*

1. Conscious of what has just been shared, members briefly name/ describe their prayer needs.
2. Intentionally call on the Holy Spirit to be present (e.g. "Come Holy Spirit, please be present as we pray")
3. Move to prayers of thanks and praise to God.
4. Pray for each others' prayer needs. Where appropriate, you may like to encourage the group to place a hand on the shoulder of the individual that you are currently praying for.
5. Conclude your prayer time with another prayer of praise, perhaps reciting the 'Glory Be' or similar prayer.