

The sermon for the Seventh Sunday after the Holy Trinity is recorded in the Holy Gospel appointed, the Holy Gospel according to St. Mark, chapter 8th, with particular focus on these words:

“...And having blessed them, he said that these also should be set before them. And they ate and were satisfied....”

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, The Holy Spirit daily graces us with Christ’s compassion. A good thing indeed, since we cannot survive on our own. We are each like a baby stranded in the middle of the desert alone. We cannot feed ourselves. From where can we buy food? What can possibly satisfy our spiritual hunger? If we look within, we find envy, strife, and all manner of unclean things. Indeed, left to us, we will surely collapse on the way.

And so too these crowds, whose pressing need has caused them to come out after Jesus. Old and young alike, a vast crowd, yet though they be many, they were in a remote place, hours away from sustenance or shelter. One of my professors said it this way: “That’s a bad thing.” And St. Mark says little of the people—whether they knew of their dire straits or not—Jesus saw their need and had compassion.

Jesus responds, saying, *“I have compassion on the crowd, because they have been with me now three days and have nothing*

to eat...” Hearing the Word of God has taken away their self-sufficiency. All that they had was gone. Before God in this “remote place” He was all they had left. Apart from Him, they have no hope. Apart from Him “they will faint by the way”. Brethren, I tell you that we are in the same dire straits.

God’s Law leaves us, as it were, bare and naked without excuse. Indeed, the Holy Spirit allows King David to see forward in space and time to this “remote place” saying, “The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God.” He found them all in a “remote place.” “They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one.”

And thus, these people who have followed Jesus, their bread-making, “Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge? who eat up my people as they eat bread, and call not upon the Lord.” And so, His Disciples were judged unfaithful long ago by King David, for they would seek an answer for the great need of God’s people—the crowds He drew near—in themselves. “ ‘How can one feed these people with bread here in this desolate place?’ And he asked them, ‘How many loaves do you have?’ And they said, ‘Seven.’ ” Mercifully through St. Mark, the law of Jesus’ sermon is brief. But stark. His

disciples don't have a clue. They are the “workers of iniquity” who “call not upon the Lord”—“from whence can a man satisfy?”

Indeed, how can man satisfy such a great need? “There is none that does good, no, not one.” So these faithless men in this remote place. “The wages of sin is death...” They are in this remote place so that they may see their futility. Not just their faithlessness, but that they may despair of themselves. How can man satisfy such a great need? A man cannot! What man can make something from nothing? What man? There is no man.

When in the beginning in that remote place, it was no man, but God Himself who breathed life into His nostrils. So also can no man in a “remote place” make bread from stones.

Yet this man, “commanded the people to sit down... and He took the seven loaves, and gave thanks, and brake, and gave to his disciples to set before them; and they did set them before the people.”

“And they had a few small fish. And having blessed them, he said that these also should be set before them. And they ate and were satisfied. And they took up the broken pieces left over, seven baskets full. And there were about four thousand people. And he sent them away.”

And as I said, with a divine economy, the Holy Spirit sets the Word before you, saying, “take and eat.” Indeed, what is it that the Holy Spirit writing by St. Mark would have us Christians recall in these words of Jesus? What is it that He intends for you to ponder, to think, at the reading and re-reading of His gospel in the Church? Let the Gospel ring in your ears and answer. Jesus “took... gave thanks, and brake...” and then, “He blessed...” And what happened? “They did eat and were filled...”

Now it’s clear this miracle of Jesus occurs historically before He gives the Disciples the Holy Sacrament. So, as this event occurs chronologically in Jesus’ Ministry, its emphasis was one thing, namely, this is no ordinary man born after the flesh. This man—Jesus—is God.

Who else can create something out of nothing? But those who were eyewitnesses perhaps understood nothing more on that day than that Jesus was their new “meal ticket.” Yet aside from their possible understanding or misunderstanding, in St. Mark’s Gospel, Jesus is more than just Israel’s new provider of food - he is their new benefactor.

Jesus is God, yes, God-enfleshed, making good on His Promise, delivering the Good in Person. And St Mark, evangelist, well

acquainted with St Matthew’s Gospel and the universal practice of the Church as to Holy Communion—in that divine economy, while proclaiming Jesus is God, we are shown too, where He is to be found today!

We are meant to see in Jesus’ feeding of these 4000-some souls not just that Jesus, who is God, is the provider of daily bread, meaning every physical need. St. Mark guides us far beyond our daily supply of food, shelter, and clothing. This seemingly impossible feeding of the four thousand prefigures, foreshadows, and foretells Jesus’ impossible feeding of the whole world. For Jesus says He gives His Flesh “for the life of the world.”

How can Jesus’ Body satisfy so many? Jesus is God. He regularly accomplishes the impossible. As He feeds four thousand hungry people, He also offers us True Meat and True Drink, nourishing us who are likewise hungry and thirsty, in a “remote place” consumed by our sins.

“But the gift of God is eternal life.” Comes now Jesus not to receive our worship and praise, for we are in a remote place. We willingly return to our sins, and are half-dead, and left to ourselves, we would perish. Your faith isn’t enough to sustain you; that is God’s

proper work. So comes Jesus not to receive of you, but that you might receive of Him.

And He gave thanks, He brake, and He gave... that He might deliver Himself unto you that you might be delivered of Him to the Father.

Indeed, we are here given by God to consume and digest Him that He might consume and digest in us everything that opposes that Faith once delivered to the Saints. His Body and His Blood is that “Angel of the Lord that encamps round about them that fear Him.” Baptized in Him, we are transferred from death to life, from that “remote place” to Green Pasture and Cool Water, remaining in and by the Body and Blood Jesus preserved holy and righteous in His sight all the days of our life, for Jesus’ most holy Passion’s sake.

[Amen.]