

17th Sunday in Ordinary Time – Year B

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Date: Sunday, 7/26/15 (07/29/12)

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Begins the “Bread of Life” Discourses (first of five)

Sources:

SCB: ([St Charles](#))

SH: ([David Scott & Scott Hahn](#))

Ben XVI: (Benedict – [2/1/06](#) & [2/8/06](#))

RC: ([Cantalamessa](#))

Augustine: (Augustine – [Tractate 24](#))

1st Reading - 2 Kings 4:42-44 - A man came from Baal-shalishah bringing to Elisha, the man of God, twenty barley loaves made from the firstfruits, and fresh grain in the ear. Elisha said, "Give it to the people to eat." But his servant objected, "How can I set this before a hundred people?" Elisha insisted, "Give it to the people to eat." "For thus says the LORD, 'They shall eat and there shall be some left over.'" And when they had eaten, there was some left over, as the LORD had said.

SCB:

- 1st and 2nd Kings are really one book which traces the religious heritage of the chosen people from the death of David (the second king, the first having been Saul) in about 970 B.C., through the division of the kingdom into the northern and southern kingdoms, to the downfall of the last king of Judah (Zedekiah) and the destruction of the Temple (586 B.C.).
- In fact, the Hebrew Bible until 1517 contained one book which encompassed what we call 1 & 2 Samuel and 1 & 2 Kings. The division of Samuel from Kings occurred in the Greek Septuagint (about 200 B.C.) and Jerome's Latin Vulgate (A.D. 392-404) followed this form. The Septuagint and Vulgate called what we now know as 1st & 2nd Samuel "1st & 2nd Kings" and what we now know as 1st & 2nd Kings "3rd & 4th Kings". Some older Catholic Bibles (such as the *Douay-Rheims*) reflect these 1st through 4th Kings headings.
- The time of our reading today is 850 give or take ten years B.C.; during the time of Elisha the prophet. Elisha (means "God has saved") was called by the prophet Elijah (means "my God is Yahweh") and has received from him his mantle and a double portion of his prophetic spirit (the double portion is the inheritance of the firstborn son; an indication that although not related by blood, Elisha was Elijah's spiritual son). Elijah was assumed into heaven in 2 Kings 2:11. Today's reading is one of the miracles of Elisha, the multiplication of loaves. Baal means lord or owner/master. Shalishah is of unknown meaning. It is located in Samaria. Baal worship appeared early in Israel. To worship the baal is to "serve" him, to

“walk after” him, or to “commit fornication after” him. The symbol of the baal was an upright stone pillar of uncertain character (2 Kings 3:2), most probably a phallic symbol. That he was a dispenser of fertility is clearly indicated in Hosea 2:2-13. This passage also indicates Yahweh was sometimes given the attributes of the Baal and worshiped with the rites of the Baal. As a result, a large number of Israelite names compounded with baal have been found in the records of Samaria – not necessarily indicating baal worship.

- The gift (bread) indicates the esteem in which Elisha was held as the first fruits were sacred to Yahweh.

Psalm 145:10-11, 15-16, 17-18 - Let all your works give you thanks, O LORD, and let your faithful ones bless you. Let them discourse of the glory of your kingdom and speak of your might.

The eyes of all look hopefully to you, and you give them their food in due season; you open your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing.

The LORD is just in all his ways and holy in all his works. The LORD is near to all who call upon him, to all who call upon him in truth.

Ben XVI:

- It is a prayer in the form of a litany which proclaims God's entry into human events in order to bring the whole of created reality to a salvific fullness. We are not at the mercy of dark forces nor alone with our freedom, but rather, we are entrusted to the action of the mighty and loving Lord, who has a plan for us, a "reign" to establish.
- This "kingdom" does not consist of power and might, triumph and oppression, as unfortunately is often the case with earthly kingdoms; rather, it is the place where compassion, love, goodness, grace and justice are manifested, as the Psalmist repeats several times in the flow of verses full of praise.
- Exalted is the divine compassion, tenderness, fidelity and goodness which are extended to the whole of humanity, involving every creature.
- The Psalm focuses on the love that the Lord reserves particularly for the poor and the weak.
- Divine kingship is not, therefore, detached and haughty, as can be the case in the exercise of human power. God expresses his sovereignty by bending down to meet the frailest and most helpless of his creatures.
- Consequently, living beings are reaching out to the Lord like hungry beggars and he gives them, like a tender parent, the food they need to survive.
- The profession of faith in justice and holiness, the two divine qualities par excellence, emerges from the lips of the person praying: "The Lord is just in all his ways and loving in all his deeds."

- The Psalmist takes the side of those who have benefited, whom he describes in various words: in practice, these terms portray true believers. They "call on" the Lord in trusting prayer, they seek him in life with a sincere heart.

2nd Reading - Ephesians 4:1-6 - I, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to live in a manner worthy of the call you have received, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another through love, striving to preserve the unity of the spirit through the bond of peace: one body and one Spirit, as you were also called to the one hope of your call; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

SBC:

- Begins the moral section; the Book of Ephesians having been divided by the scripture scholars into two sections: Dogmatic and Moral. Our reading today is the first part of Paul's call to unity.
- This was written while St. Paul was held prisoner in Rome. It is one of his "captivity epistles."
- A Christian's conduct should be consistent with the calling he has received from God (Colossians 1:10, Philippians 1:27).
- In Greek lists, humility is not a virtue. The word, in Greek carries the connotation of mean-spiritedness. Christ, however, by His example raised self-effacing service to others to the dignity of a virtue.
- We have a litany of "shoulds." Similar passages are Colossians 3:12, 1 Corinthians 13:4-5, Galatians 5:22-23.
- Charity originates not in man, but in God. Charity is basic to the building up of a peaceful human society. The peace which unites Christians is the peace which Christ brings through the Spirit.
- The Spirit is the single inner source of Christian life and continually moves the members toward peace and harmony.
- "What is this one body? They are the faithful throughout the world – in the present, in the past and in the future. ... The body does exist apart from its enlivening spirit, else it would not be a body. It is a common human metaphor to say of things that are united and have coherence that they are one body. So we too take the term 'body' as an expression of unity" - Saint John Chrysostom.
- The Spirit is the pledge of the future unified community (Ephesians 1:14).
- Christians pledge obedience to one master in their baptismal profession of faith (Romans 10:9). Jesus is the head of the Mystical Body (the Church).
- One fixed body of doctrine (1 Timothy 3:9; 6:20-21). Held in community (see Matthew 18:17).
- In 1 Corinthians 1:10-18 St. Paul uses the fact that Christians have been plunged into one Christ by baptism as a proof that there can be no divisions in the community by adherence to human leaders (see also Galatians 3:27-29).

- “The Lord is one and God is one, because the dominion of the Father and of the Son is one divinity. Moreover the faith too is said to be one, because we believe likewise in Father and in Son and in Holy Spirit. And there is one Baptism, for it is in one and the same way that we are baptized in the Father and in the Son and in the Holy Spirit. And we are dipped three times so that the one Sacrament of the Trinity may be made apparent. And we are not baptized in the names of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, but in one name, which one name we know to be God” - Saint Jerome.
- They are bonded together as brothers, children of one father. We are all part of one holy family covenant (Ephesians 3:14). What we have just heard following the litany of “shoulds” is a litany of “ones”. Jesus founded only one Church; today there are over 31,000 Protestant denominations which disagree, among other things, on what the one faith is and when the one baptism should be administered and how; resulting in many bodies.

Gospel - John 6:1-15 - Jesus went across the Sea of Galilee. A large crowd followed him, because they saw the signs he was performing on the sick. Jesus went up on the mountain, and there he sat down with his disciples. The Jewish feast of Passover was near. When Jesus raised his eyes and saw that a large crowd was coming to him, he said to Philip, "Where can we buy enough food for them to eat?" He said this to test him, because he himself knew what he was going to do. Philip answered him, "Two hundred days? wages worth of food would not be enough for each of them to have a little." One of his disciples, Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, said to him, "There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish; but what good are these for so many?" Jesus said, "Have the people recline." Now there was a great deal of grass in that place. So 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. When they had had their fill, he said to his disciples, "Gather the fragments left over, so that nothing will be wasted." So they collected them, and filled twelve wicker baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves that had been more than they could eat. When the people saw the sign he had done, they said, "This is truly the Prophet, the one who is to come into the world." Since Jesus knew that they were going to come and carry him off to make him king, he withdrew again to the mountain alone.

SCB:

- Here Saint John notes in a passing manner Jesus’ miracles. The miracles are not recounted in John but appear in the synoptics. John’s gospel relates only seven miracles. The crowd has been attracted by these miracles – this is not necessarily a sign of faith or a growing of that faith; it could be just curiosity. A faith based merely on miracles without a recognition of the nature of the one performing them would be unstable/transitory.
- Only Matthew (in recounting the feeding of the 4000, a later feeding) places a multiplication miracle on a mountainside. The mountain evokes memory of

Mount Sinai where Moses received the commandments. (In Matthew 5:1 the Beatitudes are given on a mountain and in Mark 3:13 the Twelve are appointed on a mountain)

- We are now over halfway through Jesus' public ministry and one year from his passion, death and resurrection. There are 3 Passovers mentioned in Holy Scripture, all appear in John's gospel: 1) John 2:13-23 - The cleansing of the temple immediately after the marriage feast of Cana. 2) John 6:4 - The multiplication of the loaves (today's reading). 3) John 11:55 - Jesus' passion.
- Just like the mountain is a reference back to Moses, so is this test. Numbers 11:13-15 is where Moses is concerned with the feeding of his people. Recall that the disciples had been sent out with no food, no money (Mark 6:8 – the 15th Sunday in Ordinary Time in this cycle; 2 weeks ago).
- Two hundred days' wages would be two hundred denarii (Mark 6:37 account of the feeding of the 5,000). This would be 200 pieces of silver; the denarius being the smallest silver coin, smaller denominations being of copper.
- Philip's answer is similar to Moses' observation in Numbers 11:22.
- Andrew was the disciple who brought Peter to Jesus (John 1:41). We get a brief glimpse into Andrew's personality. Andrew was the one consulted by Philip when the Greeks (Gentiles) wanted to see Jesus (John 12:20-22).
- Barley is the ordinary food of the poor. Five could be a reference to the Pentateuch, the five books of Moses.
- Almost the same words used in the synoptics to describe the institution of the Eucharist (Matthew 26:26; Mark 14:22; Luke 22:19; 1 Corinthians 11:25). Although John doesn't mention breaking the bread, the synoptics do (Matthew 14:19; Mark 6:40; Luke 9:16). The Greek word *eucharisteo*, translated here as "gave thanks" denotes a 2-way action: God-ward in praising God (giving thanks) and an earth-ward in receiving God's blessing. The synoptics have the disciples distributing the food. In view of the size of the crowds, this seems plausible – John's bypassing this detail is a reminder of the Last Supper where Jesus did the distributing.
- In the Didache (9:4) the same word is used for gathering the Eucharistic bread, a symbol of the gathering of the Church. Also in the Didache the word used for the morsels of bread is the same word used here and in the synoptics.
- Again a Mosaic setting – 12 is the number of tribes – there is enough left over for all the Jewish nation.
- The people see (correctly) in this miracle that Jesus is the prophet like Moses come to found the new Israel (Deuteronomy 18:15). It was also a Jewish belief that the prophet Elijah would return to earth to take a part in the establishment of God's kingdom (Malachi 3:23, Sirach 48:4-12). Jesus stated (Matthew 11:14; 17:12) that John the Baptist has fulfilled this mission. The people have made this statement because of the signs Jesus has performed, not because of the depth of their understanding.

- He simply goes away to avoid being proclaimed what He is not. In His dialog with Pilate (John 18:36) He explains that His kingdom is not of this world. Anything which would alter His mission as a servant of God is a temptation and is avoided.
- It is not unlikely that the Apostles shared the enthusiasm of the people. Moses went up the mountain alone. Jesus' mission is complete salvation through transforming, peacemaking, pardoning, and reconciling love.

RC:

- Provision cannot be made for man's spiritual and eternal needs without being concerned, at the same time, about his earthly and material needs.
- It was precisely the latter which for an instant was the temptation of the apostles. In another passage of the Gospel one reads that they suggested to Jesus that he dismiss the crowd so that it would find something to eat in neighboring villages.
- But Jesus answered: "You give them something to eat!" (Matthew 14:16). With this, Jesus is not asking his disciples to perform miracles. He is asking that they do what they can. To place in common and share what each one has. In arithmetic, multiplication and division are two opposite operations, but in this case they are the same. There is no "multiplication" without "partition" (or sharing)!
- This connection between the material and spiritual bread was visible in the way the Eucharist was celebrated in the early days of the Church. The Lord's Supper, then called "agape," took place in the context of a fraternal meal, in which both ordinary bread and Eucharistic bread was shared.
- The most scandalous waste occurs in the food sector. Research carried out by the United States Department of Agriculture reveals that one-fourth of food products end up every day in the garbage, not to speak of what is deliberately destroyed before it reaches the market.
- Jesus did not say that day: "Destroy the left-over fragments so that the price of bread and fish will not fall in the market." But it is exactly what is done today.
- Under the influence of repetitive advertising, "Spend, don't save!" is at present the codeword in the economy.
- Prudence must enable individuals and societies of rich countries to be more generous in their aid to poor countries.

Augustine:

- The power, indeed, was in the hands of Christ; but those five loaves were as seeds, not indeed committed to the earth, but multiplied by Him who made the earth.
- That we might admire the invisible God through His visible works; and being raised to faith and purged by faith, we might desire to behold Him even invisibly, whom invisible we came to know by the things that are visible.

- Therefore as to this miracle, since we have heard how great it is, let us also search how profound it is; let us not only be delighted with its surface, but let us also seek to know its depth. This miracle, which we admire on the outside, has something within. We have seen, we have looked at something great, something glorious, and altogether divine, which could be performed only by God: we have praised the doer for the deed.
- The Lord on the mount: much rather let us understand that the Lord on the mount is the Word on high. Accordingly, what was done on the mount does not, as it were, lie low, nor is to be cursorily passed by, but must be looked up to. He saw the multitude, knew them to be hungering, mercifully fed them: not only in virtue of His goodness, but also of His power. For what would mere goodness avail, where there was not bread with which to feed the hungry crowd? Did not power attend upon goodness, that crowd had remained fasting and hungry. In short, the disciples also, who were with the Lord, and hungry, themselves wished to feed the multitudes, that they might not remain empty, but had not wherewithal to feed them.
- The five loaves are understood the five books of Moses; and rightly are they not wheaten but barley loaves, because they belong to the Old Testament. And you know that barley is so formed that we get at its pith with difficulty; for the pith is covered in a coating of husk, and the husk itself tenacious and closely adhering, so as to be stripped off with labor. Such is the letter of the Old Testament, invested in a covering of carnal sacraments: but yet, if we get at its pith, it feeds and satisfies us.
- A certain lad, then, brought five loaves and two fishes. If we inquire who this lad was, perhaps it was the people Israel, which, in a childish sense, carried, not ate. For the things which they carried were a burden while shut up, but when opened afforded nourishment.
- And as for the two fishes, they appear to us to signify those two sublime persons, in the Old Testament, of priest and of ruler, who were anointed for the sanctifying and governing of the people.
- And at length Himself in the mystery came, who was signified by those persons: He at length came who was pointed out by the pith of the barley, but concealed by its husk. He came, sustaining in His one person the two characters of priest and ruler: of priest by offering Himself to God as a victim for us; of ruler, because by Him we are governed. And the things that were carried closed are now opened up. Thanks be to Him. He has fulfilled by Himself what was promised in the Old Testament. And He bade the loaves to be broken; in the breaking they are multiplied. Nothing is more true. For when those five books of Moses are expounded, how many books have they made by being broken up, as it were; that is, by being opened and laid out? But because in that barley the ignorance of the first people was veiled, of whom it is said, "Whilst Moses is read, the veil is upon their hearts;" for the veil was not yet removed, because Christ had not yet come; not yet was the veil of the temple rent, while Christ is hanging on the

cross: because, I say, the ignorance of the people was in the law, therefore that proving by the Lord made the ignorance of the disciple manifest.

- Wherefore nothing is without meaning; everything is significant, but requires one that understands: for even this number of the people fed, signified the people that were under the law. For why were there five thousand, but because they were under the law, which is unfolded in the five books of Moses?
- Moreover, they sat down upon the grass; therefore understood carnally, and rested in the carnal. "For all flesh is grass."
- And what were those fragments, but things which the people were not able to eat? We understand them to be certain matters of more hidden meaning, which the multitude are not able to take in. What remains then, but that those matters of more hidden meaning, which the multitude cannot take in, be entrusted to men who are fit to teach others also, just as were the apostles? Why were twelve baskets filled? This was done both marvellously, because a great thing was done; and it was done profitably, because a spiritual thing was done. They who at the time saw it, marvelled; but we, hearing of it, do not marvel. For it was done that they might see it, but it was written that we might hear it. What the eyes were able to do in their case, that faith does in our case. We perceive, namely, with the mind, what we could not with the eyes: and we are preferred before them, because of us it is said, "Blessed are they who see not, and yet believe."
- And we have been fed in reality, in that we have been able to get at the pith of the barley.
- He was the Lord of the prophets, the fulfiller of the prophets, the sanctifier of the prophets, but yet a prophet also: for it was said to Moses, "I will raise up for them a prophet like unto thee." Like, according to the flesh, but not according to the majesty. And that this promise of the Lord is to be understood concerning Christ Himself, is clearly expounded and read in the Acts of the Apostles.
- And the Lord says of Himself, "A prophet is not without honor, except in his own country."
- The Lord is a prophet, and the Lord is God's Word, and no prophet prophesies without the Word of God: the Word of God is with the prophets, and the Word of God is a prophet. The former times obtained prophets inspired and filled by the Word of God: we have obtained the very Word of God for our prophet. But Christ is in such manner a prophet, the Lord of prophets, as Christ is an angel, the Lord of angels. For He is also called the Angel of great counsel.
- He has exhorted us to faith and to laying hold of eternal life; He has proclaimed something present, foretold something future because He proclaimed the present, thence He was an angel or messenger; because He foretold the future, thence He was a prophet; and that, as the Word of God He was made flesh, thence He was Lord of angels and of prophets.