

SESSION ONE

THE MULTIPLICATION OF THE LOAVES

John 6:1-15

¹ After this, Jesus went across the Sea of Galilee [of Tiberias]. ² A large crowd followed him, because they saw the signs he was performing on the sick. ³ Jesus went up on the mountain, and there he sat down with his disciples. ⁴ The Jewish feast of Passover was near. ⁵ 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?” ⁶ He said this to test him, because he himself knew what he was going to do. ⁷ Philip answered him, “Two hundred days’ wages worth of food would not be enough for each of them to have a little [bit].” ⁸ One of his disciples, Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, said to him, ⁹ “There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish; but what good are these for so many?” ¹⁰ 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. ¹¹ 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. ¹² When they had had their fill, he said to his disciples, “Gather the fragments left over, so that nothing will be wasted.” ¹³ So they collected them, and filled twelve wicker baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves that had been more than they could eat. ¹⁴ 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.” ¹⁵ Since Jesus knew that they were going to come and carry him off to make him king, he withdrew again to the mountain alone.

Small details to consider prior to prayer

- The crowd is following Jesus because of the miraculous signs he has worked.
- Jesus chooses to lead his disciples up a mountain in a deserted place as the location for this miracle.
- The disciples have different reactions to the situation. At least one appears incredulous at the suggestion of buying food for the large crowd. Another at least attempts to offer aid, though humanly speaking it is wildly inadequate.
- The number of total people gathered may have been twice the stated amount, since John is simply capturing the number of men (without mentioning the accompanying women and children).
- Everyone is totally satisfied with the meal. No one is allowed to take any extras with them. All of the fragments are collected by the disciples at the request of Jesus.
- After the miracle, the people come to believe that Jesus is the “new Moses” promised by God and prophesied by Moses in Deuteronomy 18:15-18. As a result, they desire to take Jesus and declare him king of Israel.
- Jesus evades their attempts to assign him a role of their making (king of Israel), withdrawing to the mountain alone.

Preparing to dialogue with Jesus...

- I will take a moment in silence to acknowledge that I am in God’s presence. He looks on me with love. He has planned for this time of prayer since before I was born and has prepared a special grace for me.
- I take a moment to become aware of what thoughts, feelings, desires, or questions arose in my heart as I read the selected scripture passage.
- I invoke the help of the Holy Spirit as I now enter into conversation with Jesus using the following questions as a starting point...

Questions to ask Jesus ...

- *Jesus, why did you test your disciples when you already knew what you would do in this situation (verse 6)?*
- *Jesus, why did you instruct the crowd to recline instead of asking them to come receive the miraculous loaves from you? Did you have any particular reason beyond a timely/effective distribution of the food?*
- *Jesus, why did you have your disciples distribute the food instead of doing it yourself?*
- *Jesus, why didn't you allow anyone to take extras with them? What was the significance of collecting all the fragments?*
- *Jesus, why didn't you allow them to take you and make you king?*
- *What other questions arose in my heart or mind for Jesus after reading this section.....?*

Questions to imagine Jesus asking me...

- *My daughter/son, do you consider yourself one of my followers? Why do you follow me?*
- *My daughter/son, where are you hungry and seeking to be fed?*
- *My daughter/son, do you believe that I have the desire to feed you, to satisfy your heart's deepest hunger?*
- *My daughter/son, do you believe that I have the power to feed you, even if it appears to your human mind to be impossible?*
- *My daughter/son, how might you be trying to assign a label to me (such as the people at the end of this miracle tried to do)? Will you allow me to reveal myself to you?*
- *What other question(s) can I imagine Jesus asking me in the context of this section?*

Concluding reflection questions to help capture the fruit of my prayer.

- What stood out to me from the scripture selection (word, phrase, verse, etc)?
- What question(s) moved me most in prayer? What thoughts, feelings, or desires arose in my heart as a result of that question(s)?
- What do I feel Jesus was saying to me in this prayer time?
- What do I feel Jesus is inviting me to do to act upon our conversation or the grace I received? *If I find this question difficult to answer, I will calmly put the question to Jesus and ask him to help me know how to proceed...*