



## Things to Ponder

- [About the Author](#)
- [Order](#)
- [About the Book](#)
- [Reviews](#)
- [Readers' Comments](#)
- [News & Events](#)
- [A Prayer for the Day](#)
- [Things To Shout Out!](#)
- [Things to Ponder](#)
- [My Favorite Quotes](#)
- [FAQ](#)
- [Contact](#)
- [Home](#)

## **Homily – 17<sup>th</sup> Week in Ordinary Time – John 6:1-15**

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### **Introduction: A Miracle that Keeps on Giving**

Through most of Lectionary B, our Sunday readings are taken from the Gospel of Mark. However, this Sunday—and for the next several weeks—we leave Mark’s Gospel and view instead the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves and fishes from the rich theological viewpoint of John. In fact, this sixth chapter from John has often been called the “Bread of Life Discourse” with the focus on the Eucharist.

In many important ways, John’s Gospel uses this multiplication miracle to teach about the Eucharist. Like the Last Supper, this miracle is said to have occurred near the time of the Jewish feast of Passover. Plus, Jesus’ language is similar to the language he used at the Last Supper in the Synoptic Gospels [Matthew, Mark and Luke]. (“Jesus took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them.”)

John’s description of this event also anticipates the Messianic eternal banquet of heaven – as the crowd reclines and all hungers are satisfied with abundance. This connection is further amplified by the response of the crowd, who wants to make Jesus a king (which Jesus refuses by withdrawing.)

There are a number of details worth noting here in this miracle. John’s Gospel highlights that the bread blessed and shared are *barley loaves* – the food of the poor. This reminds us that God feeds and nourishes both our physical and spiritual needs. And, most importantly, we are sent forth from Eucharist to serve the poorest among us. *Go forth!*

Another detail worth noting here: John highlights that Jesus did not feed the people with nothing. He started with something that was already available. What Jesus did was made possible because that little boy (who was he?) was willing to share what he had with others, mostly strangers. You and I are also invited to share the little we have—time, treasure, talent—with those around us. We each have “something” to give. We start with something, not nothing. *Begin with what you’ve got!*

One last detail: Gathering up the fragments so that nothing might be lost has an interesting interpretation and twist from Scripture scholars. “Gathering” and “fragments” are eucharistic terms found in early patristic literature (Church Fathers). “Gathering and fragments” can refer to believers, as Jesus is concerned that he might lose nothing of what has been given to him. *You might even hear Jesus say: “Gather*

*them all in. All are welcomed!”*

I would invite you to take time to read and ponder the words from the *Gospel of John 6:1-15*.

What word or words caught your attention?

What in this passage comforted you?

What in this passage challenged you?

### **Further Reflections and Questions:**

In this miracle, Jesus is testing the disciples for he is always in control. Philip responds with the enormity and seeming hopelessness of the situation. *How do you respond to seeming hopeless situations?*

In the Synoptic Gospels, it is the disciples who are told to distribute the bread and fish among the people – and not Jesus by himself. That is a sign of the disciples’ future mission to bring the Good News to all. In short, you and I are blessed and privileged to be partners with Jesus. *How do you envision yourself as partnering with Christ today?*

Jesus did not want to be “king.” He dreamed of a community, where everyone is equal. He wanted no one to dominate. He wanted everyone to feel accepted. *In what ways do I tend to dominate?*

*I enter in imagination into this amazing scene. I share Philip’s puzzlement. I watch the little boy as he gives up the lunch his mother made for him. I gaze at Jesus as he prays, then as he breaks the bread and the fish. It takes so long to feed everyone, but he is smiling as he works. He fills my empty and grubby hands too, and I look into his eyes and thank him.*

*God is generous beyond my wildest imagination!*

*David Suley*

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