

## EP THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. 28 MARK 6:30-56

**A**s we compare the account of the feeding of 5,000 people with the account of Herod's banquet, we see important differences between Herod and the followers of Jesus. For example, Herod was ultimately concerned only with his own pleasure, even having St. John the Baptist killed as a result of his greed and lust. In contrast, the Apostles exhausted themselves following Jesus and serving the people (this is the only place in Mark where the Disciples are called "Apostles"). Furthermore, Herod's people were left hungry, while Jesus compassionately fed them.

The Disciples should have been able to trust Jesus to provide for His people: they had seen Him work miracles, and had even been empowered by Him to exorcise demons and heal the sick. They were therefore shocked when He told them to feed the people themselves: they even guessed that it would take 200 denarii (a typical salary for a day's work was one denarius) to feed 5,000 people! When they collected food brought by the people there were only five tiny loaves of barley bread and two small fish (see John 6:9), but Jesus miraculously used these to provide food not only for the 5,000 people, but also twelve baskets of leftovers.

There are several reasons for this miracle. The miracle was, for the crowd who witnessed it, evidence that Jesus is the Messiah (see John 6:14). The miracle also is an image of the Eucharist, as the fourth century hymn writer Prudentius proclaims: "Thou, our bread, our true refreshment, never failing sweetness art; He can nevermore hunger, who is at thy banquet fed, nourishing not our fleshly nature, but imparting everlasting life."

When the Disciples left the area to cross the Sea of Galilee, they rowed into a fierce storm that made it almost impossible for them to travel. Jesus, seeing their difficulty, walked to them upon the water and calmed the storm.

St. John Chrysostom points out that this episode teaches us a great deal about faith. For example, even though Jesus saw in the evening that the Disciples were having trouble, He did not go to them until the "fourth watch" (3-6 AM). Furthermore, He did not simply calm the storm from the shore, or row out to them and then calm the storm — He frightened them by walking upon the water. St. John explains, "Therefore neither did He remove the darkness, nor straightway make Himself manifest, training them, as I said, by the continuance of these fears, and instructing them to be ready to endure."

We should pay special attention to Jesus' words in verse 50: "It is I." The Greek words ego eimi are literally translated, "I am," which in Exodus 3:14 is the name of God, and in the Gospel according to St. John is used by Jesus to proclaim His divinity (see John 8:58).

St. Mark tells us that news of Jesus' miracle-working spread throughout the Galilee, leading to people throughout the region bringing their sick relatives and friends to be healed. St. Mark's description of the Gerasenes being eager to touch the hem of Jesus' garment indicates that they had heard about the way in which the woman with the flow of blood received her healing (Mark 5:25-34).

### A QUICK TIP FOR YOUR LIFE

## STRENGTH

The Gospels repeatedly show the Disciples getting into trouble when they are away from Jesus and not relying upon Him. They refused to remember, as Prudentius writes, "How easily can I be shipwrecked...unless you, almighty Christ, stretch forth your hand with help divine."

**When you face difficult situations, do you believe that you're strong enough to deal with the difficulty on your own, or do you rely upon God's grace?**

The Holy Apostle Paul tells us that we should go through life believing what he says in Philipians 4:13: "I can do all things in him who strengthens me". When we face difficult times, it is comforting to know that God will be with us and strengthen us.

**At the same time, when things are going well, we need to remember that it is God Who empowers us.**

