

Sixth Sunday after Pentecost 16 July 2017

“For we were buried with him by means of Baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ has arisen from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also may walk in newness of life.”

Rom. 6:4

Today’s liturgy reminds us of how God loves us all and has compassion on us in our weakness. He nourishes us spiritually with His grace in the sacraments. We can see this especially in today’s *Epistle to the Romans* (6:3-11) where St. Paul reminds us that we were buried with Him by means of our baptism, and we are given the new divine life of sanctifying grace. Today’s Gospel (Mark 8: 1-9) tells us how Jesus had compassion on the multitude who had been with Him for three days: *“I have compassion on the crowd, for behold they have now been with me three days, and have nothing to eat.”* Mk. 8:2. The Second Multiplication of the Loaves and Fishes in the desert is a representation of how Jesus will give us His own Flesh and Blood to eat and drink in order to sustain us on our journey through the desert of this life. The crowd in the desert is a symbolic and mystical representation of all who follow Jesus Christ wholeheartedly and have been given the life of grace through the Body and Blood of the Holy Eucharist.

“Thus do you consider yourselves also as dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.” Rom. 6:11

Our Baptism reminds us of the two-fold obligation which we have when we share in the death and resurrection of Christ. **“One is negative—death to sin and the disorders of our passions; the other is positive, to live the life of Christ and develop it within us. To live for God in Christ Jesus must be our ideal.”** (*The Preacher’s Encyclopaedia*, p. 380) In order to live for Christ, we must die to sin. **“All the effects of sin are comprised under the name of death; all the effects of grace are comprised under the name of life... We live in proportion as we are associated with the life of Christ. Now it is in his death that Jesus Christ makes us participate in this life; we live in him only so far as we die in him.”** (Ibid, p. 381) In Baptism, we died to sin and became alive to the life of grace in Christ. **“Baptism applies to us the fruit of Calvary. In it Jesus Christ associates us, in a mystical yet very real way, with his death and his life. By**

associating us with his death he neutralized the active principle which sin has implanted in us, and which constituted the old man; by associating us with his life, he destroys all the germs of death and confers on us the privilege of an endless life: life of the soul and life of the body, life of grace and life of glory.” (Ibid., p. 381)

Mystical Death

When we were baptized into Christ we became incorporated in Him: **“...baptism truly deadens the old man in us, truly infuses into our veins the divine sap and truly creates in us a new being... Now baptism represents sacramentally the death and life of Christ. It must therefore, produce in us a death, mystical in its essence, but real in its effects; death to sin, to the flesh, to the old man, as well as a life in conformity with the life of Jesus Christ risen from the dead.”** Ibid, p. 382 This is why St. Paul tells us *‘For we know that our old self has been crucified with him, in order that the body of sin may be destroyed, that we may no longer be slaves to sin;’* Rom. 6: 6. Once dead to sin, then we can be alive to Christ: **“But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live together with Christ; for we know that Christ having risen from the dead, dies no more, death shall no longer have dominion over him.”** Rom. 6: 8-9 Once dead to sin we will be living the life of grace in Christ: **“Thus do you consider yourselves also as dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.”** Rom. 6:11

Spiritual Sense of the Multiplication of Loaves

In today’s Gospel, St. Ambrose tells us of the spiritual sense of the second miracle of *The Multiplication of the Loaves and Fishes*. Dom Prosper Gueranger in his *The Liturgical Year Vol. II* comments: **“St. Ambrose, whose comments we are following, compares the miraculous repast mentioned in today’s gospel with the other multiplication of loaves brought before us on the fourth Sunday of Lent: and he remarks how, both in spiritual nourishment and in that which refreshes the body, there are various degrees of excellence. The Bridegroom (Christ) does not ordinarily serve up the choicest wine, He does not produce the daintiest dishes, at the beginning of the banquet He has prepared for His dear ones. Besides, there are many souls here below who are incapable of rising, beyond a certain limit, towards the divine and substantial light which is the nourishment of the spirit. To these, therefore—and they are the majority, and are**

represented by the five thousand men who were present at the first miraculous multiplication—the five loaves of inferior quality are an appropriate food, and one that by its very number, is in keeping with five senses, which, more or less, have dominion over the multitude. But as for the privileged favourites of grace—as for those men who are not distracted by the cares of the present life, who scorn to use its permitted pleasures, and who, even while in the flesh, make God the only king of their soul, -- for these, and for these only, the Bridegroom reserves the pure wheat of the seven loaves, which, by their number, express the plenitude of the holy Spirit (Seven Gifts), and mysteries in abundance.” Gueranger, p. 164-5

Men not of this world

St. Ambrose sees the four thousand men of today’s gospel symbolic of those who partake of the Holy Eucharist. This sanctified bread corresponds to the seventh day of God’s rest in creation: “Seven is the number of divine rest; it was also to be that of the fruitful rest of the sons of God, of perfect souls, in that peace which makes love secure, and in the source of the invincible power of the bride, as mentioned in the Canticle (8:4 ‘I charge you, daughters of Jerusalem, not to stir my love, nor rouse it, until it please to awake.’) It is for this reason that the Man-God, when proclaiming on the mount of beatitudes of the law of love, attributed the seventh to the peace-makers, or peaceable, as deserving to be called, most truly, the sons of God. It is in them alone that is fully developed the germ of divine sonship. Thanks to the silence to which the passions have been reduced, their spirit, now master of the flesh, and itself subject to God....Rightly, then,... the seventh beatitude is that of the peaceful; to them belong the seven baskets of the crumbs that were over and above. This bread of the Sabbath, this sanctified bread, this bread of rest, is something great; and I even venture to say, that if after thou has eaten of the five loaves (First Multiplication), thou shalt have eaten also of the seven, thou hast no bread on earth that thou canst look forward to... The more intense their hunger, the more they long for their divine object and for no other, the more will the heavenly food strengthen them with light and love, the more will it satiate them with delight... all the goodness, all the beauty of created things, are incapable of satisfying any single soul.” Gueranger, p. 166-7 Only the Body

and Blood of Jesus Christ in the Holy Eucharist can give us eternal rest: “*I am the living bread that has come down from heaven; if anyone eat of this bread, he shall live forever and the bread that I give is my flesh for the life of the world.*” Jn. 6:51-2

“I am the bread of life.” Jn. 6:48

The Catholic Church in her wisdom obliges all its members to attend Sunday Mass in order that they may have the opportunity to receive Holy Communion in order to gain eternal life. Jesus said, “*He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has life everlasting and I will raise him up on the last day.*” Jn. 6:55 Sadly, many of Jesus’ disciples walked away from him that day and said, “*This is a hard saying. Who can listen to it.*” Jn. 6: 61. Today, many Catholics are saying the same thing and are not going to Mass on Sunday. How will they gain eternal life if they do not receive Holy Communion? As the body needs food to live, so the soul needs the spiritual food of the Holy Eucharist, “*As the living Father has sent me, and as I live because of the Father, so he who eats me, he also shall live because of me.*” Jn. 6: 58

Fr. John Hardon on the Holy Eucharist

And he cometh to his disciples, and findeth them asleep, and he saith to Peter: What? Could you not watch one hour with me?

[41] Watch ye, and pray that ye enter not into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh weak. Mt. 26:40

“When one’s entire spirituality becomes a Eucharistic spirituality firmly convinced of God’s Real Presence, one’s entire spirituality becomes authentically Catholic. Once one establishes belief in God’s Real Presence, his (her) belief in every major mystery of the faith grows; faith in the Incarnation, faith in the Holy Trinity, faith in the Resurrection.

“Those who become convinced in the Real Presence of Jesus in the Holy Eucharistic become like the disciples on the road to Emmaus; missionaries of the Real Presence, proclaiming Jesus’ true and full Presence in the Eucharist to the entire world. These Eucharistic soldiers and apostles as inspired by the Real Presence desire others to share in their communion with Jesus present in the Mass and Eucharistic adoration. These missionaries of the Real Presence are missionaries who extend the Kingdom of God and the Eucharistic Lord throughout the world.”