

# **Archbishop Lori's Homily: Wednesday 1st Week of Advent; Order of Malta Evening of Recollection**

*Wednesday, 1st Week of Advent*

*Order of Malta Evening of Recollection*

*Dec. 5, 2018*

We have just heard how Jesus miraculously fed more than 4,000 people – people who had gathered at the foot of a mountain on eastern side of the Sea of Galilee. This vast crowd was likely made up mostly of Gentiles for it is thought that this miracle took place somewhere near the Decapolis, a federation of ten Greek-speaking communities in the region.

Just as his Father had rain down manna from heaven, and just as Elijah had provided a year's worth of food for the widow of Zarephath, and even as Elisha had multiplied loaves for one hundred men, so Jesus feeds first, the 5,000 people, mostly Jews, and now, in the present Gospel, Jesus feeds some 4,000, mostly of Gentile origin.

Looking back upon the miraculous feedings of the Old Testament, we see that Jesus' miraculous largesse was not without precedent. Nonetheless, it was astonishing. Working with a few loaves and fish, Jesus fed multitudes in a manner that supersedes every law of physics known to us. The bread and the fish just kept on coming. No one knew how. It was certain only that the generosity of Jesus was streaming forth in abundance.

## **Jesus' Pastoral Love**

In meditating on these feedings, practical people like you and me tend to focus almost entirely on their miraculous nature. "How did it happen?" we'd to know and perhaps someday we will. Yet while we are wrapped up in the so-called "mechanics"

of the miracle, we may risk overlooking something very beautiful and precious in the Gospel. It's Jesus' look of love.

On seeing the vast crowd, we are told, Jesus' heart was moved with pity. Yes, his heart was moved with pity as he peered out across a vast sea of hunger and heartache that pressed in around him. In this sea of humanity were the lame, the blind, the deformed, the mute, an array of people suffering from physical and spiritual maladies. And the crowds were amazed as Jesus cured them all. But his pastoral love did not stop there: His heart was moved by the fact that so many had been with him for three days without anything to eat. Paradoxically, Jesus who had cured the sick was afraid that many in the crowd would collapse on their way home because of hunger. So Jesus fed them out of love. True to form, he sought to assuage not only their physical hunger but also their deepest hunger to be loved and to be loved infinitely.

### **The Mission of Malta**

As you listened to this Gospel, did it not resonate in your hearts as members of the Order of Malta? Did not the mention of the blind, the lame, and the deformed – bring to mind people that you have met along the way in the service you have been called to render?

Yes, we can easily see how this Gospel applies to the mission of the Order of Malta. You who lead and participate in the various missions of Malta whether it is prison ministry or taking part in the Lourdes pilgrimages or any of the other worthy endeavors of the Order – you know that you have been called to be living extensions of this Gospel. You are called to participate in Jesus' mission to heal and to feed.

All of us must go to the Lord for forgiveness and healing even as we are privileged to know and love the sick, to share their journey, to be in some way the instruments of their healing and reconciliation, and the restoration of hope in their hearts. And how often have you returned from a ministry only to share amazing stories of what the Lord has chosen to do in and through your hands and your hearts. As one who has served as a priest for over 40 years, I can tell you, it's humbling.

### **The Source**

As we think of our own infirmities and hunger, we wonder where we find the strength to move beyond our comfort zone and to encounter people who lives, at least on the surface, are different than our own. Where do we find the generosity of spirit to do that which, perhaps on a few years ago, we might have hesitated to do. The answer can be found in three little words in this evening's Gospel: "blessed, broke, and gave." Jesus blessed the loaves, broke them, and gave them to the people. At every Mass the same words are said: "He took bread, blessed it, broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying - "This is my Body which will be given up for you!" "Blessed, broken, given." Those words should be said of us too.

Let us be no less amazed than the crowds who gathered at the foot of the mountain near the Sea of Galilee. For Jesus still teaches us, still heals us, still feeds us, still looks at us with love - no matter how many times we have looked the other way, no matter how many times we may have betrayed his love. And it is in that look of love that penetrates to the depth of our being that you and I somehow find the strength to multiply Jesus' love - to extend it to that vast sea of humanity - all around us every day -

## **Conclusion**

In the season of Advent, we await the coming of the Lord - at Christmas to be sure but also at the end of time. Let us not miss the fact that the Lord comes to us daily in his Word and in the Eucharist and in those who need our love.

May God bless us keep us in his love!