

In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit

The crumbs have all been picked up.
The 12 baskets full of left-over bread are packed into the boats.
They've said their good-byes and farewells.

So today's reading begins:

"Immediately Jesus made His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side, to Bethsaida, while He dismissed the crowd." (6:45)

Good.

Finally.

Now the disciples have a moment to themselves—
away from the large and noisy crowds,
away from Jesus.

Now they can let their guard down and try to sort through what the heck just happened!

You can picture it, can't you?

I don't know how long it takes to feed 5,000 people.

It takes us roughly 2.5 hours to feed about 200 mouths at the Lord's Diner, and there are about twice as many of us as there were disciples.

I'd imagine it took quite a while: a few hours to distribute all that bread and all that fish.
And then to clean up afterwards would've left these 12 disciples exhausted!

And more than that, with all the work they didn't get a chance to step back and reflect on what went on.

So here, in the boat, the disciples are probably doing a bit of debriefing.

"Do you think He had some hidden bread we didn't know about?"

"Or maybe he had a partner in the crowd who owned a bakery nearby."

"How'd He do it?"

We don't know what the disciples said—but we do know that they didn't get it:

"And they were utterly astounded, for they did not understand about the loaves" (6:52)

They just didn't get it.

This is something Mark does in his Gospel that the other Evangelists don't do so much—
he shows the disciples, the 12, to be a lot like us.

There are times we just don't get it.

We don't see the obvious.

We don't recognize this Jesus for who He is and what He does.

Today's Gospel is pretty amazing:

you have Jesus walking on water, just after feeding 5,000 bellies with 5 loaves and 2 fish, and when Jesus gets into the boat and the wind comes to a stop, the text literally says: **“and they were utterly beside themselves”** (6:51).

Why?

Because they didn't get it!

They still didn't recognize that this Jesus is the Lord of heaven and earth.

They didn't get that He is both God and man.

They didn't see Jesus as anything more than a kind and wise and humble teacher.

Sure, He was a great example for them.

And of course, He taught as they had never learned before.

But sometimes Jesus needs to walk on water and terrify us a bit,

so we see Him as more than an example, more than a guide, more than someone to imitate.

The disciples just didn't get it.

But did you notice who did?

Once they got to the other side, and out of the boat, Mark says:

“The people *immediately* recognized Him and ran about the whole region and began to bring the sick people on their beds to wherever they heard He was.” (6:54)

The crowds got it!

They recognized this Jesus.

They knew He was more than just an example—

He was life itself.

So they got together everyone they could find,

the sick and the broken, the paralyzed and the dying.

And they brought them all to Jesus, **“wherever they heard He was”** (6:55).

Isn't that amazing: these people, whoever they are, recognize Jesus for who He is—

the Lord of creation, the Lord of the body, the Lord of Heaven and Earth.

And notice how they do whatever it takes to get to this Christ.

They'll carry the beds of the sick, lead the lame and the blind,

and leave everything else behind—just to be with this Jesus.

The crowds get it.

The disciples don't.

But get this: Jesus comes to both.

When the disciples struggled against wave and wind, Jesus came to them.

And when they were terrified to see Him in His power—thinking Him to be a ghost—

Jesus quickly removes their fear: **“Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid”** (6:50).

He gets into the boat *with them*.

And immediately the wind comes to a halt. The sea grows calm. And all were amazed.

And for the crowds, none were turned away.

“And wherever He came, in villages, cities, or countryside, they laid the sick in the marketplaces and implored Him that they might touch even the fringe of His garment. And as many as touched it were made well.” (6:56)

So it is with Jesus.

He gets into the boat with all of us disciples who still don't get it.

He calms our fears and speaks to us a word of peace.

He heals, He saves, He comforts, and He feeds.

But notice how He does it all in real time and real place with a real body and a real garment.

Everything Jesus does in these miracles is done in a way you can be certain of.

The disciples quickly found out that Jesus was no ghost because He got into the boat with them.

He put His hands on the rail, and one foot after another, brought some splashes of water with Him into the boat.

And those who were sick and dying—well they longed to touch His garment.

They went to whichever place they heard He would be.

They didn't sit in their homes thinking,

“Well, I know God is everywhere, so I might as well stay here.”

No, they got up and went to where He was, where He was located, where He was promised to be.

And so it goes for us.

Our Lord Jesus does things with a real body in real time and in a real place.

Certainly God is everywhere—

but for your sake He locates Himself in a certain time and place where you can come to Him.

The miracles spoken of in today's Gospel all center around the body of Christ.

So if you're broken or sick, hurting or in despair, or if you just don't get it,

then wherever the body of Christ is, that's where you want to be.

And the body of Christ is here today:

in, with, and under the bread.

That body of Christ, given to you today, is what bodies us together also, as the Body of Christ.

It's this sacramental presence of Christ that we can't help but to gather around—

from every place, every region, every village, city, and countryside—
 wherever we're coming from, it's to this sacrament we want to go.

For this is the Body of Christ.

This is the place where God has chosen to locate Himself *for you*—
 for your healing, for your joy, for your life, for your forgiveness.

It is here, with this body, that our Lord speaks again His words:

“Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid.” (6:50)

Here, again, He gets into this boat, and in the process we all get a bit wet;
 and He enters inside over the railing.

He comes to be with you, *for you*.

That's who this Jesus is.

And He is who He is and does what He does whether you get it like the crowds,
 or whether, like the disciples, you don't.

He comes to you anyhow.

To remove your fear, to heal your disease, to forgive your sin.

In this place, where the body of Christ is promised to be found, it's not about you—
 but Jesus for you.

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