

**The Miracle that Wasn't?**  
**Fashionable Priests and the Multiplication of the Loaves**  
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Last Sunday I visited a parish in another city and I learned something new. The multiplication of loaves didn't really happen. The greedy people following Jesus in the wilderness had loaves and fishes stuffed up under their robes. The disciples didn't know about this surplus of hidden food, but the priest last Sunday did! He was a very trendy, hip priest. He claimed to know things that amazed me. He also fixed some of the old fashioned prayers at Mass—he made them more contemporary.

The priest said that in seminary he was taught that Jesus kept pulling bread and fish out of the basket.” But when he was in Mexico the natives helped him understand the real truth. They taught him that it was not really a miracle at all—Jesus just taught the poor people to share. The priest said that during religious processions the Indian families in Mexico would slip away into the woods to gobble their own lunches in secret so they wouldn't have to share with others. Then they would join the group again. Everyone *knew* the people had hidden food and when challenged to share they reluctantly did so. Everyone pulled out their food and shared with the group.

The priest recounted how the Indians studied the Bible together and how they decided that no miracle took place with the loaves and fish. Jesus just preached to them about caring and sharing. They responded to Jesus and pulled food from under their robes and there was plenty for everyone with twelve basketfuls left over.<sup>1</sup> So this priest now teaches that no miracle took place—the gospel writers misunderstood what really happened.

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<sup>1</sup> I don't believe for one minute that the Indians of Mexico read the gospels on their own and rejected the miraculous. If they actually said what the priest claimed, it was because they were influenced by some well-meaning priests or nuns who taught this non-miraculous interpretation of Scripture. This interpretation is of recent appearance and based on a new tradition often promoted by those with a socialist political agenda.

Unhappily, he is not alone in this skewed interpretation. I heard another sixty-something priest teach the same thing several years ago. It seems this interpretation has quite a following. I've read it in books and magazines; I've heard it in homilies and in the media.

What was the *real* miracle? For the progressive theologians and priests, the real miracle was not the multiplication of loaves, but the act of caring. Jesus was able to convince selfish people to share. Teaching people to share was the real miracle.

This trendy priest was smart enough not to deny a miracle *outright*. That would have been risky. Denying that Jesus performed a miracle with the loaves and fishes was unnecessary. Telling a good story and blaming the natives for the novel interpretation accomplished the same thing while protecting himself from the consequences of actually *saying it* himself. I know the bishop would not be pleased that such a thing was taught in his diocese.<sup>2</sup>

The story was told with great humor and passion, but the denial of the miraculous and the undermining of the clear intent of Scripture was accomplished none the less. By telling a good story the priest actually placed the onus of this false teaching in the laps of the poor people in Mexico. Very clever and discreet indeed.

I think the skewed teaching went right over the heads of most people because of the enthusiastic and smooth delivery. Those ignorant of the Scriptures, the teaching of the Church and the writings of the Fathers might have missed it. Average parishioners are usually not aware of the agendas of these homilists and often miss the heterodox teaching foisted on them.

And what a shame that it was on Corpus Christi Sunday when the liturgical readings were intended to *build* faith in the miraculous, not weaken faith in Scripture and the Catholic Church. I was dismayed as the priest twisted the Scriptures like a rubber nose to deny the very thing the readings were intended to affirm. It was all I could do to stay in my seat.

There are actually six accounts given in the gospels of feeding the multitudes. Matthew 14 and 15, Mark 6 and 8, Luke 9 and John 6. Jesus fed the people on at least two occasions—once 5,000 men and another 4,000 men; once with five loaves and two fish, and again with seven loaves and a few fish; once with twelve baskets of remaining bread gathered and in another five baskets.

### **What is a Miracle?**

A miracle is not a natural occurrence apart from divine power. It is not the actions of people to share or show charity. It is not simply a natural event which seems bigger than life. A miracle is the hand of God acting within nature to produce an effect that neither man nor nature unaided could do on their own.

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<sup>2</sup> I will find out for sure though, after I inform the bishop not only of the scandalous teaching on the multiplication of loaves, but also in the way this priest added to and subtracted from the prayers and rubrics of the Mass.

According to the *Catholic Encyclopedia* under the article on “Miracles” we read,

“A miracle is said to be above nature when the effect produced is above the native powers and forces in creatures of which the known laws of nature are the expression, as raising a dead man to life, e.g., Lazarus (John 11), the widow’s son (III Kings 17).

“A miracle is said to be outside, or beside, nature when natural forces may have the power to produce the effect, at least in part, but could not of themselves alone have produced it in the way it was actually brought about. Thus the effect in abundance far exceeds the power of natural forces, or it takes place instantaneously without the means or processes which nature employs.

“In illustration we have the multiplication of loaves by Jesus (John 6), the changing of water into wine at Cana (John 2). . . . A miracle is said to be contrary to nature when the effect produced is contrary to the natural course of things.”

There are many problems with this priest’s homily. Let’s take a look at a few of them.

### **Jesus and Disciples Unaware of Customs of their Own People?**

Jesus and the disciples knew the people and the customs of the times. If it was customary to people to carry hidden food under their robes, it would have been known by Jesus and the disciples. But Jesus and the disciples, unlike this “wiser-than-Jesus” priest didn’t realize there was a hidden treasure of food.

The Twelve came to Jesus and made a request. They needed food to feed hungry people, or they needed to send them away. They never mentioned or taught anything about hidden food and sharing. Are we to believe that if Jesus intended the message to be about sharing that at least *one* of the writers would not have stated so or shared the homily Jesus preached about sharing?

Rather, three of the gospel writers say “Send the crowd away, that they may go into the surrounding villages and countryside and find lodging and get something to eat; for here we are in a desolate place.” The priest seemed to know something the disciples were totally oblivious to—there was plenty of food and no one needed to go into town to find food. Silly disciples!

Jesus and the disciples knew there was no abundance of bread hiding in secret picnic baskets. As St. Jerome said, “Wherein He calls the Apostles to breaking of bread, that the greatness of the miracle might be more evident by their testimony that they [the people] had none [no food].”<sup>3</sup>

But if that is not enough, let’s look carefully at the words of Jesus in Matthew 15:32  
“Then Jesus called his disciples to him and said, ‘I have compassion on the crowd,

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<sup>3</sup> Thomas Aquinas' *Catena Aurea* vol. 1 part 2 "Matthew 14:15-21" (Albany, NY, Preserving Christian Publications, 2000) pg. 534-36.

because they have been with me now three days, and have nothing to eat; and I am unwilling to send them away hungry, lest they faint on the way” (cp. Mark 8:2-4).

Jesus states clearly that the people had been with him in the deserted area of three days. Even if they *had* originally brought hidden food, it would have been eaten over the three days of being in the wilderness. Jesus clearly stated that *they had no food!*

Are we to believe that Jesus was completely ignorant of the situation and only thought the people were really hungry? Was Jesus a fool? Or, are we to believe that Jesus knew there was plenty of hidden food and was just lying about the situation to make a point? Should I believe what a priest *wants* me to believe about this passage, or what Jesus actually says?

### **Does Jesus Mention Sharing?**

The line goes something like this: “The people had plenty of food but they were hoarding it. Jesus taught them to share so they all pulled out their surplus of food from under their robes and everyone shared with his neighbor. That is the lesson! Jesus did not do a physical miracle; the real miracle was convincing selfish people to share with others.”

But I challenge anyone to carefully read the gospel accounts of the multiplication of loaves and fishes, and see if they can find even a *hint* of this “sharing interpretation.” Nothing is said about Jesus teaching the crowds at this point, much less that he taught them about “sharing.” Scripture never mentions or even hints that Jesus exhorted everyone to pull up their robes to reveal their hidden stashes of food. No, in fact it is never even implied.

The multiplication of loaves is the only miracle told in all four gospels (except the resurrection, of course). It was considered important enough to include in all four gospel accounts. And here we come to the next big problem.

Since these events were so important, why not the slightest clue that sharing was the primary import of the event? Some homilists try to convince us there was no miracle—it was all about sharing, but within the text there is no suggestion to support this erroneous view.

In Cana of Galilee Jesus turned water into wine (John 2:1-11). Maybe he didn’t actually do a miracle there either. Maybe he just convinced all the wedding guests to bring their own bottles of the best wine to dump into the stone jars. Maybe John got it screwed up again and Jesus didn’t really do a miracle but just taught people share—like with the bread and fish in the wilderness.

Interestingly, Jesus does not address the crowd at all. He speaks only to his disciples. The dialog goes on between Jesus and his disciples. The only time the crowd is addressed is to order them to sit down in groups—not to teach them generosity. So, where are we told that Jesus taught them about sharing? If he did teach them to share their hidden food, why

did the gospel writers fail to inform us—even in six separate accounts? If this was the main point of the story, shouldn't it show up at least once?

### **Why Do Priests Consider it Necessary to Deny the Miraculous?**

Why to people think it necessary to deny divine miracles? Do they want to suggest Jesus is not divine? Are they trying to be accepted by the skeptics who ridicule the supernatural? Are they more concerned with being trendy and clever than in telling the truth? Or is it simply because they were poorly trained in seminaries that slipped from orthodoxy during the last decades? Are they trying to say that our Lord was incapable of such a miracle? Do they think the gospels are full of myths and fables? Maybe they are suggesting that the Apostles conspired to give a false report?

Maybe they suppose the apostles rewrote history—maybe in an attempt to cover their incompetence in failing to realize all the fragments of food hidden among the crowd? Are they trying to imply that our Lord really knew the alleged food was there (even though he said forthrightly that there was *no food*) simply to show forth a “miracle of the heart”? Do they think a lesson in “sharing” more important than the proof of Jesus’ divinity and his profound teaching demonstration of the miraculous bread of the Eucharist?

Any way you slice the bread, these men are twisting the Scriptures and deviating from the consistent teaching of the Catholic Church and of the Fathers. They foolishly throw things open to question and doubt which no wise and reverent person has dared to do in the past.

### **Where Did the Bread REALLY Come From?**

Matthew informs us of two separate occasions of feeding the multitudes (Matt 14 and 15). In Matthew 15:36 it is clear what happened and where the miraculous bread came from. It came from the hands of Jesus, not the people! Matthew writes “[Jesus] took the seven loaves and the fish; and giving thanks, He broke them and started giving them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the people.”

Is there any indication here that the bread just appeared among the crowd and kept growing as everyone pulled out food and began to share? Did the “multiplication” begin from the hands of the people to the mouths of their neighbor? Of course not! Nor did the bread start appearing first in the hands of the generous crowd to the hands of the disciples to the hands of Jesus. It was the other way around. It went from the hands of Jesus who took, blessed, broke and kept giving it into the hands of the disciples who passed it to the people.

As St. Jerome affirmed, “The multitude receives the food from the Lord through the Apostles; as it follows, and he gave the loaves to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Thomas Aquinas' *Catena Aurea* vol. 1 part 2 "Matthew 14:15-21" (Albany, NY, Preserving Christian Publications, 2000) pg. 534-36.

It took a LOT of bread and fish to feed 10,000-20,000 people or more.<sup>5</sup> The fragments of bread left over filled many baskets. The gospel writers even say the remaining bread represented a “superabundance.” What was the source of the remaining superabundance? Had the remaining fragments come from the picnic baskets? Or were the fragments left over from the loaves blessed and multiplied by Jesus? Here is what John says,

“So they gathered them up, and filled twelve baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves which were left over by those who had eaten. Therefore when the people saw the sign which He had performed, they said, “This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world.”” (John 6:13-14).

The people had seen a supernatural miracle (John refers to supernatural miracles as “signs” throughout his gospel), they declared that he was “truly the Prophet who is to come (based on Deut 18:15-18). And seeing the miracle they wanted to make Jesus the king (Jn 6:15). (See *Jesus the New Moses* below.)

### **Miraculous Bread: Jesus the New Moses**

In the gospels Jesus is presented as the New Moses. At the transfiguration (interestingly right after the miracle of the loaves and fishes) Jesus meets Moses on the mountain. They talk about his “exodus” soon to take place. Moses had led the first exodus, passing through the Red Sea (baptism, 1 Cor 10:1-4), and then providing miraculous bread in the wilderness (just as Jesus gave the bread in the wilderness and the Eucharist for our journey). Jesus is now the new Moses on a mountain, with a shining face, engulfed in a cloud and leading an exodus—all referring back to Moses on the mountain of Sinai.

When the miracle of the multiplication of loaves is told in the gospel of John, it is immediately related to the manna in the wilderness. The people saw the connection between Moses and Jesus, the manna and the miraculous bread. Jesus was the Prophet who had been promised. The people wanted to make him a king, *not* because he taught selfish people to share, but because he had done a stupendous miracle like their ancestors had seen in the wilderness of Sinai.

Since the two events are tied together—especially by St. John—then we could ask, Was the manna *really* a miracle in the wilderness of Sinai or had Moses simply taught the people to share? Did the Israelites all sneak out of their tents at night to scatter manna around the desert? Had they been hoarding manna in their tents or under their robes?

I don’t think so! God had performed a genuine, certifiable miracle and the people knew it. And they knew it with Jesus too.

As the new Moses, Jesus could do no less than the Moses of old. The people would not have been impressed with anything less than a stupendous miracle. And impressed they were! Look at their reaction. They tried to make Jesus a king! If he had just given a lesson on generosity, they would have gone around patting each *other* on the back—they

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<sup>5</sup> Jesus fed 5,000 men on one occasion not counting women and children. Add one woman and one child for each man and you already are at 15,000.

would have been the heroes, they were the ones to receive praise for sharing. But they had seen the miraculous, supernatural hand of God. Jesus was the Prophet promised by God and they wanted him to be king.

### **Structure of John's Gospel Insists on a Real Miracle**

John's gospel is masterful composition constructed with intricate detail. The fine intricacies hold together like a gorgeous tapestry. He opens with "the Word was God" and concludes with "My Lord and my God." Everything in between proves the divinity of Jesus. John provides seven miracles which he calls signs.<sup>6</sup> They are signs pointing to the divinity of Our Lord. He uses seven because that is the number of perfection—seven days, seven sacraments, etc. When God makes an oath in Hebrew it is literally "God sevens himself." John's use of seven signs is remarkable. But if you delete one of the miracles and say it is just a "caring, sharing" moment between people in the crowd, you destroy the beautiful symmetry John weaves into his gospel. You end up with six miracles, and in Scripture six is the number of man and incompleteness.

When one violates the Scripture in one place, it has the effect of a snowball rolling down the hill. It begins to unravel everything and do violence to the fabric of the Scriptures and the faith.

### **What Did the Fathers of the Church Teach?**

Of course we all know that the Fathers of the Church are 2,000 years stupider than theologians and clergy today (tongue in cheek). We have computers, technology and textual criticism. We also have skepticism, modernism and we know miracles can't really happen. So, why do we really care what these old guys from the first centuries believed? Why should we care what the Magisterium teaches?

Well, for those who do care, here are a few pertinent glimpses into the past—to the men who were authentic witnesses to the apostolic teaching, who knew the culture and language far better than we do today and who were not blinded by modern relativism and skepticism. They still believed that God existed and could perform real miracles within the physical world he created *ex nihilo*.

The Fathers were not trendy innovators. They were careful to preserve the Apostolic Tradition. If I have to choose between the homilists and theologians that are "smarter-than-the-gospel-writers," or the brilliant Fathers, bishops, martyrs, theologians and popes of the first centuries, I will cast my lots with the old guys every time.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> John even numbers the first two signs to encourage us to keep counting. The seven are these 1) water into wine, 2) healing the official's son, 3) healing the cripple at Bethesda, 4) walking on water, 5) multiplication of loaves, 6) healing the blind man, and 7) raising Lazarus from the dead. On the eighth day, the start of a new week, he rises from the dead—the eighth miracle/sign which shows a new beginning on the eighth day.

<sup>7</sup> Pope Leo XIII wrote his encyclical *Providentissimus Deus*, November 18, 1893, to instruct the faithful on the study and teaching of Sacred Scripture. He explains the need to follow the teaching and examples of the early Church. We would be wise to heed his words: "But he must not on that account consider that it is forbidden, when just cause exists, to push inquiry and exposition beyond what the Fathers have done; provided he carefully observes the rule so wisely laid down by St. Augustine—not to depart from the literal

Here are just a few of many of examples of what they taught about the loaves and fishes.

CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA: The feeding of the multitudes in the desert by Christ is worthy of all admiration. But it is also profitable in another way. We can plainly see that these new miracles are in harmony with those of ancient times. They are the acts of one and the same power. He rained manna in the desert upon the Israelites. He gave them bread from heaven. “Man did eat angels’ food,” according to the words of praise in the Psalms. But look! He has again abundantly supplied food to those who needed food in the desert. He brought it down, as it were, from heaven. Multiplying that small amount of food many times and feeding so large a multitude, so to speak, with nothing, is like that first miracle. COMMENTARY ON LUKE, HOMILY 48.

THEODORE OF HERACLEA: He [multiplies loaves] not only once but also a second time, in order that we should know his strength. This strength by which he feeds the multitudes when he wishes and without bread finds its source in his divinity. He does this in order to bring them to believe that he himself is the one who earlier had fed Israel for forty years in the wilderness. And Jesus not only fed them with a few loaves of bread, but he even produced a surplus of seven baskets, so that he might be shown as incomparably surpassing Elijah, who himself also caused a multiplication of the widow’s small quantity of oil and flour. FRAGMENT 98.

AUGUSTINE. He multiplied in His hands the five loaves, just as He produces harvest out of a few grains. There was a power in the hands of Christ; and those five loaves were, as it were, seeds, not indeed committed to the earth, but multiplied by Him who made the earth.

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and obvious sense, except only where reason makes it untenable or necessity requires; a rule to which it is the more necessary to adhere strictly in these times, when the thirst for novelty and unrestrained freedom of thought make the danger of error most real and proximate. Neither should those passages be neglected which the Fathers have understood in an allegorical or figurative sense, more especially when such interpretation is justified by the literal, and when it rests on the authority of many. For this method of interpretation has been received by the Church from the Apostles, and has been approved by her own practice, as the holy Liturgy attests; although it is true that the holy Fathers did not thereby pretend directly to demonstrate dogmas of faith, but used it as a means of promoting virtue and piety, such as, by their own experience, they knew to be most valuable. The authority of other Catholic interpreters is not so great; but the study of Scripture has always continued to advance in the Church, and, therefore, these commentaries also have their own honorable place, and are serviceable in many ways for the refutation of assailants and the explanation of difficulties. But it is most unbecoming to pass by, in ignorance or contempt, the excellent work which Catholics have left in abundance, and to have recourse to the works of non-Catholics—and to seek in them, to the detriment of sound doctrine and often to the peril of faith, the explanation of passages on which Catholics long ago have successfully employed their talent and their labor. For although the studies of non-Catholics, used with prudence, may sometimes be of use to the Catholic student, he should, nevertheless, bear well in mind—as the Fathers also teach in numerous passages—that the sense of Holy Scripture can nowhere be found incorrupt out side of the Church, and cannot be expected to be found in writers who, being without the true faith, only gnaw the bark of the Sacred Scripture, and never attain its pith.

LACTANTIUS. He called His disciples, and asked what quantity of food they had with them. But they said that they had five loaves and two fishes in a wallet. . . . He Himself broke the bread in pieces, and divided the flesh of the fishes, and in His hands both of them were increased. And when He had ordered the disciples to set them before the people, five thousand men were satisfied, and moreover twelve baskets were filled from the fragments which remained. What can be more wonderful, either in narration or in action?

IRENAEUS. For although the Lord had the power to supply wine to those feasting, independently of any created substance, and to fill with food those who were hungry, He did not adopt this course; but, taking the loaves which the earth had produced, and giving thanks, and on the other occasion making water wine, He satisfied those who were reclining [at table], and gave drink to those who had been invited to the marriage; showing that the God who made the earth, and commanded it to bring forth fruit, who established the waters, and brought forth the fountains, was He who in these last times bestowed upon mankind, by His Son, the blessing of food and the favor of drink: the Incomprehensible [acting thus] by means of the comprehensible, and the Invisible by the visible; since there is none beyond Him, but He exists in the bosom of the Father.

I could go on and on with quotations from the great theologians, saints, bishops, Doctors of the Church, popes and teachers. None of them even hint at denying the miraculous or even suggest that the event could be reduced to a lesson in generosity.<sup>8</sup>

The burden of proof is on the modern skeptic. What can they show us from Scripture to prove their point? What evidence from the early Church can they gather to justify their novel and untenable interpretation? Can they justify their position with *any* patristic writings? Can they demonstrate any of the Fathers who deny that Jesus actually performed a divine miracle in multiplying loaves and fishes as a proof of his divinity? Can they demonstrate that the Church has ever taught this was simply a matter of “sharing”? Where and why have they come up with this novel and unfounded, even silly teaching?

These innovators who stray from the solid foundations of biblical interpretation and orthodoxy have to reckon with the entire patrimony of the Catholic Church, which upholds without any deviation whatsoever that our Lord actually did multiply loaves and fishes by divine power to feed the multitudes.

### **Hip Priests: “Wow, is he ever dated!”<sup>9</sup>**

Sometimes my wife and I flip on the TV and spot a movie produced in the 60’s or 70’s. It pops right out at us. I usually say, “Wow, that movie sticks out like a sore thumb. It is

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<sup>8</sup> If you want to read many other quotations from the early Church, get a copy of Aquinas’ *Catena Aurea* which provides hundreds of quotations on the Gospels from the Fathers of the Church.

<sup>9</sup> *Hip* is defined by *Collins Dictionary* as “aware of or following the latest trends in music, ideas, fashion, etc.” According to the *Collins Thesaurus* synonyms for *hip* were “*Slang* aware, clued-up (*informal*), fashionable, in, informed, in on, knowledgeable, onto, trendy (*Brit. informal*), wise (*slang*), with it (*informal*).

sure a 60's movie!" It was a strange time. I remember them well. Those hippie days—breaking with established norms to find freedom from rules and standards—seem strange to sensible people today.

I'm afraid some priests and theologians are "dated" too—they remind me of shag carpet, tie-dyed T shirts and psychedelic lights and colors.

Taking a historical perspective, it was during the 60's through the early 80's that the anti-supernatural approaches to the gospels became popular in local parishes. My guess is that 10-20 years from now it will have faded into the past like a bad dream. The new priests coming on the scene today are replacing the "dated" homilists of the 60's, 70's and 80's. Just like shag carpet disappeared like a puff of stale incense, so these outdated homilies will hopefully become a thing of the forgotten past.

When I hear a homily like the one I heard on Corpus Christi Sunday it reminds me of flipping on the TV to one of those 60's movies. I whisper to my wife "Wow, this homilist sure dates himself—right out of the 60's!"

Am I angry? Yeah, maybe a bit. Paul said we should be angry, just without sin. Jesus was angry at times too. I get irritated when priests mess with Scripture and the Mass. It is not part of their job description—it is a *violation* of their job description and the vows they took. I am not angry so much at any individual priest as much as the whole mindset. I feel sorry for the priests.

Some of the homilists who teach this nonsense do it because of poor training themselves. I pity because the seminaries failed them; they were encouraged to follow trendy innovations without wise mentors to properly guide them. But others *chose* to follow "modern" deviations that broke with established Church teaching and practice. Some who promote the "caring and sharing" reinterpretation of the miracle are driven by a suspicion of private property and favor a socialistic political agenda for redistribution of material goods, like Catholic Robin Hoods who take away from wealthy to give to the poor. Not that sharing and generosity are bad; they are not. Loving God and loving one's fellow man is the heart of the law of Christ. But to reshape these miracles like wet clay to fit a socialist agenda is disingenuous and wrong.

Frankly, I'll be glad when I can go to Mass without holding my breath wondering if the priest will try to be "fashionable" and cool by changing the prayers, denying the miraculous and violating the Mass! I am so grateful that the new priests are starting to put things right again.

### **Who is Deceiving—the Gospel Writers or the Homilist?**

It is obvious from the text that each account of the feeding the thousands was intended to report a divine miracle. That is the clear and obvious intent of the gospel writers. Do you think the four gospel writers set out with the intent to deceive and lie to their readers? If we accept what these homilists propose, denying the miraculous in these stories, then we

are accusing the eyewitness gospel writers of one of two things: 1) being ignorant of what really happened, or 2) intentionally intending to deceive their readers.

Even if it were *not* a miraculous multiplication of loaves, it is obvious that the writers *thought* it *was* miraculous and wrote to inform us that they had seen what they thought was a miracle. And those reading the accounts thought the writers intended to report a real miracle. Eyewitnesses were still alive when the gospel accounts were written. If there had been no miracle, they would have scoffed at the New Testament writings and exposed them as lies.

And believing Jesus actually performed a miracle was not just the universal belief of the early Church. For two thousand years, readers have believed not only that the writers intended to relay their eyewitness account of a miracle but that Jesus actually performed such a miracle.<sup>10</sup>

What actually happened in the wilderness long ago? There are only three options: 1) there was no miracle, only “sharing” and the gospel writers were ignorant and just *thought* it was actually a miracle; 2) there was no miracle, only “sharing” and the writers conspired to deceive their readers into thinking it *was* a miracle; or 3) it *was* a miracle and the gospel writers reported it accurately.

It seems clear which option is correct. It is not as complicated as some people seem to think. We must also remember that as the Second Vatican Council taught in *Dei Verbum* that all that the Scripture writers affirm as true is without error. The passage about the multiplication of the loaves and fish certainly affirms a miracle—even though there are those who wish to undermine it.

### **Jesus Still Asks: “Do you not yet understand?”**

It seems like Jesus is asking this question again, this time to the priests today who stray from the truth and fail to listen and understand. Listen to what Jesus says in the context of the multiplication of the loaves:

“And they discussed it with one another, saying, ‘We have no bread.’ And being aware of it, Jesus said to them, ‘Why do you discuss the fact that you have no bread? Do you not yet perceive or understand? Are your hearts hardened? Having eyes do you not see, and having ears do you not hear? And do you not remember? When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you take up?’ They said to him, ‘Twelve.’ ‘And the seven for

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<sup>10</sup> Matthew and John were direct eyewitnesses; Mark and Luke wrote accounts gathered from still-living eyewitnesses. Luke gathered his information from many sources and Mark was writing as Peter’s secretary, so to speak, and Peter had been an eyewitness of the miracle. Had it *not* been a miracle, all those reading the gospel accounts who had been in the wilderness with Jesus, would have betrayed the gospel writers and said, “What are you guys talking about. We all just pulled out our hidden food and shared it with our neighbors. There was no miracle!” Of course, the people who deny the miracle think they are 2,000 years smarter than the ancients. Not only do they deny the miracle, but many of the same people will deny that the gospels were actually written by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. They often try to tell us that no eyewitnesses were involved since the gospels were written many years later.

the four thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you take up?' And they said to him, 'Seven.' And he said to them, 'Do you not yet understand?'" (Mark 8:16-21).

### **Final Thoughts and Hopes for My Kids and Grandkids**

I hope I never have to endure another such arrogant and foolish homily. I hope my kids and grandkids will never have to endure the 70's at Mass, either by listening to insipid homilies, pitiful additions and deletions to the sacred liturgy, or priests who think they are 2,000 years smarter than Jesus, the gospel writers and the holy popes, bishops, priests, martyrs and Doctors of the Church.

I am very proud to be Catholic and very happy to watch the 70's fading into the past as sanity begins to return to various pockets where silliness has infiltrated for the last few decades. One of the Church's mottos rings true at this point: "Always reforming, always in need of reform."

Dear Heavenly Father, help your people to always believe in the miracles of Our Lord, the truth of Sacred Scripture and the beauty of the Divine Liturgy as handed down by Holy Mother Church. May we be ever wary of trendy nonsense so as to remain loyal to the faith of our Fathers. Amen!

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Below are four of the six accounts of the multiplication of loaves as found in the gospels (another two accounts can be read in Matthew 15:32-39 and Mark 8:34-44).

#### **Mark 6:35-44**

35 When it was already quite late, His disciples came to Him and said, "This place is desolate and it is already quite late;  
36 send them away so that they may go into the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat."  
37 But He answered them, "You give them something to eat!" And they said to Him, "Shall we go and spend two hundred denarii on bread and give them something to eat?"  
38 And He said to them,

#### **Matthew 14:15-21**

15 When it was evening, the disciples came to Him and said, "This place is desolate and the hour is already late; so send the crowds away, that they may go into the villages and buy food for themselves."  
16 But Jesus said to them, "They do not need to go away; you give them something to eat!"  
17 They said to Him, "We have here only

#### **Luke 9:12-17**

12 Now the day was ending, and the twelve came and said to Him, "Send the crowd away, that they may go into the surrounding villages and countryside and find lodging and get something to eat; for here we are in a desolate place."  
13 But He said to them, "You give them something to

#### **John 6:1-13**

5 Therefore Jesus, lifting up His eyes and seeing that a large crowd was coming to Him, said to Philip, "Where are we to buy bread, so that these may eat?"  
6 This He was saying to test him, for He Himself knew what He was intending to do.  
7 Philip answered Him, "Two hundred denarii worth of bread is not sufficient for them, for everyone to receive a little."

“How many loaves do you have? Go look!” And when they found out, they said, “Five, and two fish.”  
39 And He commanded them all to sit down by groups on the green grass.  
40 They sat down in groups of hundreds and of fifties.  
41 And He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up toward heaven, He blessed the food and broke the loaves and He kept giving them to the disciples to set before them; and He divided up the two fish among them all.  
42 They all ate and were satisfied,  
43 and they picked up twelve full baskets of the broken pieces, and also of the fish.  
44 There were five thousand men who ate the loaves.

five loaves and two fish.”  
18 And He said, “Bring them here to Me.”  
19 Ordering the people to sit down on the grass, He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up toward heaven, He blessed the food, and breaking the loaves He gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds,  
20 and they all ate and were satisfied. They picked up what was left over of the broken pieces, twelve full baskets.  
21 There were about five thousand men who ate, besides women and children.

eat!” And they said, “We have no more than five loaves and two fish, unless perhaps we go and buy food for all these people.”  
14 (For there were about five thousand men.) And He said to His disciples, “Have them sit down to eat in groups of about fifty each.”  
15 They did so, and had them all sit down.  
16 Then He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed them, and broke them, and kept giving them to the disciples to set before the people.  
17 And they all ate and were satisfied; and the broken pieces which they had left over were picked up, twelve baskets full.

8 One of His disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, said to Him,  
9 “There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are these for so many people?”  
10 Jesus said, “Have the people sit down.” Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand.  
11 Jesus then took the loaves, and having given thanks, He distributed to those who were seated; likewise also of the fish as much as they wanted.  
12 When they were filled, He said to His disciples, “Gather up the leftover fragments so that nothing will be lost.”  
13 So they gathered them up, and filled twelve baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves which were left over by those who had eaten.