

07/26/15 17 B

-- During this particular Church year, we read primarily from Mark's gospel, but for the next five weeks we are reading from John. In fact, we're reading from one chapter of John—chapter 6.

-- Today we hear the great sign of the multiplication of loaves and fishes. It's the only miracle—apart from the resurrection—in all four gospels. Like all of the great signs in John's gospel, Jesus speaks about the meaning of the sign after it occurs.

-- But we're getting ahead of ourselves, and I don't want the next five week's homilies to sound like a broken record.

-- Often, we overlook small details in a miracle story that have great significance. For instance, we hear that this takes place as Passover is drawing near. Passover celebrated the deliverance of Israel from slavery in Egypt. Here Jesus becomes our Passover. He delivers us from sin and death.

-- Later on in John's gospel, Jesus will be crucified at the same time the Passover lambs that year were slaughtered. This is different timing from the other gospels, when Jesus dies after the Passover meal. In other words, for John, Jesus is the lamb slain so we might have new life.

-- Also, Jesus takes the initiative in feeding the people. He takes the loaves and fish and distributes them. In the other gospels, Jesus teaches them first, then feeds them. In John, the process is reversed.

-- Then he asks the disciples to gather up the fragments, so that nothing will be wasted. I'm sure he wanted that food to be used for the needy, but that's not the primary point. Jesus nourishes his people with an abundance, with more than enough to sustain them.

-- But he also wants us to be content with enough. Perhaps the deeper message here is that we should be willing to use what we do not absolutely need to help others who do not have enough. "Waste not,

want not” isn’t just a nice saying. It should guide our practical choices in life.

-- When all is said and done, this sign shows us that we are dependent upon the Lord for what we have in life. This applies to our physical resources and spiritual resources alike. It applies to the billionaire and the pauper equally, and everyone in between.

-- Jesus is our Passover lamb, the one who gave his life that we might have eternal life. Only Jesus can deliver us from the power of sin; we cannot do that ourselves.

-- And only Jesus Christ can feed us with the Bread of Life. He does that as we come here every week to hear his word, eat his Body and drink his blood.

-- Then he calls us to go out from this Church into the world to share the life we have received with the people we encounter. That is the meaning of what I say at the end of Mass.

-- Whether that means sharing our faith, giving encouragement to someone who is depressed, or sharing our food or resources with someone who is poor: we are all sent forth to share the bread of life we have been given.

-- May we do our best to be faithful in carrying out that mission.