

FATHER MARK SCHULTE
HOMILY
EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME
AUGUST 2, 2026

“Breaking Bread”

My Brothers and Sisters, there are four Gospel writers, they are; Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. All four writers do not always write about the same thing or cover the same topics. For example, the Gospel of Luke covers the infancy narrative, the story of Jesus’ birth. John will focus on the authentic nature of Jesus. He will say “in the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God” (Jn 1:1). He emphasizes the Divinity of Jesus. Matthew traces our Lord’s lineage as does Luke. But all four Gospel writers recount the miraculous feeding of the multitudes as if to say that this is an event that one should pay particular attention to (Mt 14:13-21) (CCC 1335).

Jesus learns about the death of John the Baptist and decides to take some solitary time away in a remote place. Having already developed a certain amount of notoriety, the people follow after Him. He disembarks from the boat to find a large crowd of people. Even though He wants to be alone, He ministers to their needs, healing their sick ones, as a shepherd takes care of the sheep before Himself. The people are like children, lost sheep, and being God incarnate Jesus already knows what will transpire next and uses the occasion to teach His disciples and the people.

It grows late into the day and there is not enough food in this remote place to feed a large crowd of people. The disciples suggest that the people be sent away to find something to eat in local villages. But here is where Jesus will step in and use the occasion to teach. The only food there is a small amount of bread and some fish. Jesus commands all the people to sit on the grass. The words of psalm twenty-three come to mind; “The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want; He makes me lie down in green pastures” (CCC 1293).

Then Jesus performs an action that all Catholic people should readily recognize. Jesus looked up to heaven in prayer, blessed and broke the bread, gave the bread and fish to His disciples to distribute to the people. Five loaves and two fish for thousands of people! The people will have their fill of the miraculously multiplied bread, and then all the pieces of bread and fish will be carefully collected. Nothing will be lost or wasted.

On another occasion the apostles will observe Jesus perform this action of blessing and breaking bread at the Last Supper Passover Meal. And a third time, He will perform this action after He is raised from the dead, on the road to Emmaus and on the shore while they were fishing (Lk 24:13-35) (Jn 21:1-14). They recognized the resurrected Jesus when He blessed and broke the bread. The blessing and breaking of bread is an action that He will command His disciples to do while they are at the Last Supper Passover Meal (CCC 1333-1344).

In the breaking of the bread, Jesus gave the apostles a distinct sign of His true presence among them. We as Catholics continue to observe this unique sign every time we participate in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. The priest will specifically call the faithfuls’ attention to this act of the breaking of the bread both in his words and actions. He will

say: “while they were at supper, Jesus took bread, broke it, and gave it to His disciples saying; take and eat this is my body, do this in memory of me” (Lk 22:19).

A little later the priest will take the bread and break it in half. This is called the “fractioning rite”, the rite of breaking bread, very specific to the Mass. God prepared His people for the Holy Eucharist many hundreds of years earlier in part through this rite at the Passover Meal in Egypt and in hundreds of successive Passover Meals up until the Last Supper with Jesus (CCC 1329). The Apostles probably recognized this action because it was part of their religious custom, but it is a custom that Jesus continues to bid His Church perform in memory of Him.

Even to this day when the Eucharistic bread is broken and distributed among the people, not a single crumb of the bread is wasted or lost, just as it happened when Jesus fed the five thousand. Each small little piece is the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Jesus Christ. The altar server will hold the paten under the chin of each communicant, carefully catching any particle of consecrated bread that may fall. At the end of communion, the priest will carefully collect any particles of the host from the paten, his fingers, and the ciboria and carefully consume them. All of these specific actions are a sign of our faith in the real presence of Jesus in the Holy Eucharist.

This faith can also be carefully cultivated in the homes of believing families. From time to time the entire family can gather for a meal. The father of the family, grandfather or uncle can offer a blessing over an unsliced loaf of bread. After the blessing, he can break the bread and give a piece to each member of the family. This was an ancient custom in Sacred Scripture particularly during the Passover meal. A father is the priest of his family. This action will also serve to solidify the father’s role as a shepherd representing Jesus Christ, just as the priest does in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. (*)

The Apostles told Jesus that it was getting late and that they were in a deserted place. The deserted place represents this world in which we live in. That it was late means that believers should act with urgency for there isn’t much time. Therefore, go to Holy Mass, participate in the breaking of the bread and receive Jesus worthily in Holy Communion. This is what separates the believer from the rest of the world. Faith is the great divider, and the Breaking of the Bread is a great sign of that Faith. This is what Jesus wanted His disciples to see. This was the sign that he gave to them and to His Church for future reference. That something as simple as breaking bread can have such profound significance.

(*) A Prayer of Blessing over Bread

Holy Lord, Almighty Father, eternal God graciously deign to bless this bread with thy Spiritual benediction that all who eat it may have health of body and soul and that they may be protected against all sickness and all the snares of their enemies. Through Jesus Christ thy Son, the living bread that came down from heaven and giveth life and salvation to the world; who liveth and reigneth with Thee in the unity of the Holy Ghost, forever and ever.
Amen