

# Lent IV

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[ 0 : 00 ] In the name of the Father and of the Son of the Holy Ghost. Amen. Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so.

! Nevertheless, the Bible is not the only way that God tells us that He loves us. In fact, all of creation, everything from the sky above to the ground below, everything from the air we breathe to the food we eat, it is all evidence that God loves us.

So why did Jesus feed the multitude in this morning's Gospel? Well, before we read the rest of John chapter 6 and discover that our Lord used the miracle of the feeding of the 5,000 to again teach us about the Holy Eucharist, let us first not overlook the obvious.

The people were hungry. God loved them. So He fed them. It's as simple as that. For sometimes we get so caught up in all the grandiose spiritual explanations of a particular text that we overlook the obvious.

God loves us and therefore provides for our every need. And not just our spiritual needs, but also our physical needs.

[ 1 : 30 ] For it would be foolish for us to think that there is not one part of our lives that God does not care about. After all, the same God who created and provides for the soul is the same God who created and nourishes the body.

Therefore, in this morning's Gospel, our Lord sees a great multitude coming toward Him. And so He asks, He asks St. Philip specifically, where shall we buy bread that these may eat?

But this He said in order to test him, to test Philip, for he Himself knew what He was about to do. And I don't really know why, out of all the disciples, our Lord chose St. Philip specifically to test at that point in time.

I only know that He did. So did Philip pass the test? Well, I'm not exactly sure of that either. Because I'm not exactly sure what kind of test was being given.

I mean, was poor Philip at this point in time supposed to quote some Bible passage or elaborate on some specific point of Christian doctrine? I doubt it.

[ 2 : 55 ] I kind of think that Philip was just supposed to learn what it truly means to be a disciple of Christ. And that means not just spiritual care, but physical care as well.

In fact, in St. Luke's version of the feeding of the 5,000, our Lord even directly tells all of His disciples, you give them something to eat.

In other words, as the disciples of Christ, you feed the hungry. You provide for those in need. You continue to do the work of our Lord's ministry. And that same ministry is not just spiritual, but physical as well.

For that same ministry is about providing for the physical needs and necessities of our neighbor's body, just as our Lord did in this morning's gospel.

[ 3 : 58 ] For the Christian church must not be so heavenly minded that she ceases to be any earthly good. Yet sadly, sometimes, sometimes I think we focus so much on fasting and prayer during the season of Lent that we forget, and I know that sometimes I forget, that acts of physical service and increased financial giving, putting a bit more in the offering plate on Sunday morning in addition to what is normally given, well, that is a big part of Lent as well.

Nevertheless, in this morning's gospel, it was not 200 denarii worth of bread that fed 5,000 men, but it was the faith of a little child.

The sacrifice of one small boy who had only five loaves and two small fish. That's what our Lord used to feed thousands.

For one of the things Lent teaches us is to sacrifice. To sacrifice our time, our energy, our fortune and goods, and sometimes even our very lives for the good of the kingdom of God.

While trusting that if long ago our Lord fed 5,000 men with so little, then he can certainly do it again. [ 5 : 41 ] For our job as Christians is not to determine how the Lord will use any of those sacrifices we offer, but our job is only to offer those sacrifices by faith, completely trusting in him.

For today, the good Lord wants us to learn to care for one another's bodies just as much as he wants us to care for one another's souls. For the Lord can do very much with very little, but that still means that the little must first be given, and that sacrifices, no matter how great or how small, must still be made.

Yet physical needs require physical labor, just as material needs require material goods. For there simply is not one aspect of human life that God does not care about.

Therefore, we also should care for every aspect of human life, and not just through fasting and prayer, but also through physical acts of mercy, and the generous giving of alms.

For this is what it means to be a disciple of Christ, to give what we ourselves have first been given by him. Or to again quote from St. Luke's version of the feeding of the 5,000, you give them something to eat, the rest the Lord himself will do.

[ 7 : 23 ] In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.