

Sixth Sunday of Pentecost – Feeding of the 5,000: Hunger and Responsibility

*Delivered by Rev. Fr. Ghevond Ajamian
St. Sarkis Armenian Orthodox Church, Dallas, TX
June 26, 2016
Gospel Reading: Matthew 14:13-21*

In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

We have all heard the miracle of Christ feeding the five thousand, but this miracle is unique. This is the only miracle which Christ performs and is mentioned in all four Gospels. The question then is: why is it so special? Many of us would think that walking on water is more impressive or healing the sick is more noble or even raising the dead is more worthy of being mentioned. Then why is feeding more than five thousand people specifically mentioned by every evangelist? It is because this miracle is relatable to every person in the world in two ways. First, it deals with hunger, which everyone experiences and second, it speaks of responsibility, which all of us have.

Hunger, in essence, is a pain caused by the lack of food and nutrient. Everyone, from the 8-minute old new born to the 108 year old grandma has felt hunger. It is only through eating food that we can satisfy our hunger and rid ourselves of that pain. Yet, this also means that we must eat correct food, otherwise the pain will momentarily go away and when it returns, we will be in even more pain than before. This is true with all types of hunger, physical, emotional and spiritual. It is crucial that we fill those voids (hunger) correctly, lest we suffer more.

Physical hunger requires good and nutritious food, emotional hunger calls for friends and family, and spiritual hunger demands God. However, people replace these things with other temporary pain relievers. They replace food, family, friends and God with alcohol, drugs, sex, shopping, overeating, junk food, work and other religions, finding some relief, which eventually disappears.

The miracle of the feeding of the five thousand also teaches us responsibility. In both Armenian and English, responsibility mean, “to give an answer, response” to a task we are commissioned to do. Christ says, “You give them something to eat” when advised by the disciples to dismiss the multitudes so they could go to the villages to purchase food.

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In today's world, there are so many who are spiritually hungry and need God, and we ask, "Who will feed them?" Is it the priest? Is it the church? Is it someone else? Christ's answer should ring in our ears when we think this question, "You give them something to eat!" But our natural response might be, "With what? I have little faith. I don't have the knowledge. I am not experienced or live a holy life. What can I give them?" This is the same response that the disciples gave. They said, "All we have is five loaves of bread and two fish. How can we feed these many people?" They were passing responsibility to someone else.

With very little, dear faithful, God performs great miracles. Christ did not complain about how little the disciples had or send them to find more, rather He commanded them, saying, "Bring it!" He gave thanks, blessed it, broke it and gave it to His disciples who, in turn, gave it to the multitudes and was able to feed more than five thousand people. He satisfied their hunger with only five loaves and two fish. The very little we think we have can satisfy another's hunger. We merely need to offer it to God and He will provide the miracle.

Let us look for the hungry, those who need to be fed spiritually and need to feel the love and comfort of Christ Jesus. Let us not pass the responsibility to another, but take it upon ourselves and always remember Christ's words, "You give them something to eat."

Amen.