

FEBRUARY 18, 2025 FATHER LARRY MARCILLE

My dear friends in Christ, imagine not having enough food to feed your guests. That would be an embarrassment for this to happen to any one of us. And today we hear, in our gospel story, Jesus never wavers from the fact that one must trust in God, not in material things. He is frustrated by the lack of understanding of his disciples. And do we allow anxiety or fear from keeping us from trusting in God? The apostles worried because they forgot to bring bread for the journey, and that was just after the miracle of the loaves and fishes. Jesus miraculously fed 5,000 people, and on another occasion, as we heard, 4,000 people. How easy it is for us to forget what God has already done for us. And we doubt what He promises in the future. Scripture tells us that "perfect love casts out fear," 1 John 4.18. We should ask ourselves, each and every day, for God to fill our hearts with His love and to increase our faith in His provident care for us. Jesus warned the disciples to beware of the bread that corrupts, such as the leaven of the Pharisees because when leaven ferments, it changes the dough into life-enriching bread when heated. But in contrast to that, leaven bread that was not baked would rot and become putrefied.

For the Jews, leaven was a sign or symbol of evil influences. It would symbolize anything which rots and corrupts. Not just physical, but spiritual and morally, as well. Therefore, Jesus tells his disciples, "beware of the bread of the leaven of the Pharisees, and the leaven of Herod, as well." Jesus warned the disciples to avoid the ways of the Pharisees and the Sadducees. They were blinded by their arrogance, and they were unable to recognize the truth that Jesus spoke in the name of his Father. So, we again must ask ourselves another question. Do we allow leaven in this spiritual, moral, and intellectual way to influence our way of thinking and living? Jesus contrasts the leaven, which

produces life, especially the abundant life which God offers, through Christ as the true bread of heaven. He contrasts that with the bread that corrupts the mind, the body, and the soul. That being of the Pharisees and the Sadducees.

As the disciples to continue to worry about physical bread for the journey, Jesus reminds them of the miraculous provisions he has provided for them to feed the 5,000 and 4,000. He then upbraids them for their lack of trust in God. But we sometimes are just like the apostles, aren't we? When we are preoccupied with our present needs, and then we forget about the presence of God within our lives. When the people of Israel travelled in the desert for 40 years, they were homeless and helpless. God was with them, however, every step of the way. And He provided them with shelter, with food and water, each step along the way, because they trusted in Him. Each day, He gave them what they needed. Jesus teaches us to trust in God's abiding presence and to provide us what we need each day, to live as His sons and His daughters. Again, we ask ourselves, do we pray with joyful confidence? "Father, give us today our daily bread"? That's what we should think about. "Give us today our daily bread."

Our prayer for this mass today, Lord Jesus, you alone are the true bread of life which sustains us each and every day. Give us joy, give us strength to always serve you, and to help us turn away from the leaven of sin and worldliness which only brings us corruption and death.