



Mark 8:1-10

In those days when there again was a great crowd without anything to eat, he summoned the disciples and said, "My heart is moved with pity for the crowd, because they have been with me now for three days and have nothing to eat. If I send them away hungry to their homes, they will collapse on the way, and some of them have come a great distance." His disciples answered him, "Where can anyone get enough bread to satisfy them here in this deserted place?" Still he asked them, "How many loaves do you have?" "Seven," they replied. He ordered the crowd to sit down on the ground. Then, taking the seven loaves he gave thanks, broke them, and gave them to his disciples to distribute, and they distributed them to the crowd. They also had a few fish. He said the blessing over them and ordered them distributed also. They ate and were satisfied. They picked up the fragments left over -- seven baskets. There were about four thousand people. He dismissed them and got into the boat with his disciples and came to the region of Dalmanutha.

Introductory Prayer: Lord, how quickly I lose faith and begin to trust more in things that I can touch and see than in your promises and strength. But I do believe in you, that you are the Bread of Life, and that only you can satisfy the deepest longings of my heart. As you are my Creator, you know what I need and provide for me each day. As you are my Redeemer, you lead me along the pathway of the cross and forgiveness. I want to follow you more closely.

Petition: Lord, strengthen my faith, so that I can be magnanimous like you.

1. "I feel sorry for all these people." Jesus shows compassion for the crowd, even for their temporal needs. He knows how earthly they can be, seeking only to satisfy their need for bread and water. In another passage he says, "Why worry about what you are to eat, or drink, or what you are to wear? ... All these things the pagans seek" (Matthew 6:25-33) -- "pagans," that is, those with no faith or trust in the heavenly Father. Our Lord does not worry about food and clothing for himself, although he does seek to provide them for others. But his charity doesn't end there. He sincerely desires their greatest good, and for this reason gives them much more than a passing meal. Together with bread and water, he gives them the gift of faith. After all, man does not live on bread alone" (Luke 4:4).

2. “Where could anyone get bread to feed these people in a deserted place like this?” The apostles ask a very human question, revealing the poverty of their faith in Jesus. Such a question, without faith, would become a self-fulfilling prophecy. Since the task seems impossible, why try at all? How often does this way of thinking rein us in from doing great things for God and expecting great things from him? How often do we resign ourselves to defeat, content to mourn and lament seemingly hopeless situations, as if God were not almighty and willing to help us? We need the faith of the Blessed Virgin, who believed the impossible and became the mother of all who believe.

3. “They ate as much as they wanted and they collected seven basketfuls of the scraps left over.” Jesus offers the fullness of life and love, an abundance of goodness and grace, to all who follow him. His ways are the ways of life. He allows us to suffer want in this life so that we will tap into the true source of abundance through faith, hope and love. Those who seek themselves by seeking purely material goods — which are limited by definition — will always be in want and will always feel the threat of losing what they have. Those who seek Christ and his grace — which is unlimited by definition — will never fear when they lose their earthly goods. That is why Jesus says that to anyone who has (faith, hope, love, grace, the gifts of the spiritual life), more will be given, and from the one who has not (none of these spiritual gifts), even what he seems to have (material possessions which are here today and gone tomorrow, always decaying and coming to an end) will be taken away (Luke 8:18).

Conversation with Christ: Lord, give me the gift of compassion, so that I may serve others with your heart. Give me the gifts of faith, hope and love, so that I will understand that your goodness knows no bounds or limits, and that you wish to pour out your grace on all until our cups are overflowing.

Resolution: I will be magnanimous in my charity towards others today.