

Trinity VII

July 14, 2024

Mark 8:1-9

St. Joseph Parish/ Fr. Plimpton

Although there are striking similarities between this feeding miracle and the earlier feeding of the five thousand, they are two distinct miracles. This morning, Mark's gospel depicts Jesus confronting the harsh realities of human hunger, as opposed to the precarious reality of a sheepfold of people without a trustworthy shepherd. True to Mark's ability to communicate much with a minimum of words and to move on quickly, his gospel story of Jesus responding to hunger is bare bones. The crowd is no longer near the cool lake breeze, there is no green grass to sit upon. They are more in the desert than in a wilderness, and the lack of human habitation meant procuring food was hopeless. Notice too, in the gospel passage, the resemblance to the story of God's gift of manna in the wilderness.

In front of him, Jesus beholds a sea of sandy people come from afar for Him, and they have not eaten for three days. Can you imagine what becoming progressively more hungry for three days while on a gruelling journey feels like? I don't even know what three days' hunger feels like..but what's drawing them on sure must be irresistible.

What draws on the infirmed, the women with child, the worn out elderly who "have seen it all"? Mark records no crowd complaints about hunger; he says only that Jesus knows their need, true to a God who knows our needs better than we. Mark regards the meal as miraculous-not a sacramental meal, but a basic, austere meal of bread and fish in which all their physical hunger was satiated. Like at the end of a fast, we are hungry; yet a fast soon over only amplifies our hunger again for the Lord who has drawn us closer to Him as a consequence of our devotion. Maybe our Lord's magnetism was so

strong, people forgot their bellies along the way... Mark says throughout his gospel that Jesus enjoined his disciples to keep a lid on news of His healing and feeding miracles. Still, the news spread, the crowds grew, their needs multiplied, the people's hopes in Him soared... all the way to the Cross. His ability to draw people unto Himself never ceased...never ceases.

But again, what was drawing along so many people out of their familiar comfort zones? It was not just miraculous works. After all, Peter and Andrew just dropped their nets at His call and... beheld Him. There was something else..something about beholding His person, and seeing His selfless acts of compassion for others, so that it was humanly impossible not to be drawn in, impossible not to be strongly drawn to consider what might be His motive.. His inner thoughts..God's thoughts.

For our ancestors to have been held by the gift of Jesus' person points to a striking enthusiasm and a persistence taking hold of them, that led them to be carefree..free of what used to matter. Because the worlds of every individual in that crowd had been ripe for an "all needs met" savior, as are ours.

We can't touch His hands, hear the actual timbre of His voice, or wrap our arms around Him. This miracle in Mark shows him to be the True Bread of Life of which John later speaks, and we are the ones coming here like little iron filings all shined up each Sunday morning as if drawn by a magnetism that is His alone. Still, don't you wish you could have experienced what the four thousand experienced, and to have arrived here today swaddled in the throes of Jesus' miracle? I suggest to you, however, that we do experience divine magnetism yet... the pull of the Holy Trinity! For, who is not enthralled by the mystery of our God?..whose faith does not yearn for deeper understanding of the ways of our Maker, Redeemer, and Sanctifier?

Remembering always that all of God does all that God does, permit me to tease out the three persons a little from their unity. Think of how the Father draws us into His natural world of blossoms, the mood changes of restless seas, and a beckoning universe beyond our windowsills . I think of his creating each of us His beings..human beings who have been endowed by Him with the ability to create little human beings. And, we are more and more drawn to the only One we trust to have control of our human history.

When God the Son promised to abide in our hearts and we in His, that abiding suggests there is magnetism joining together our want of Him and His will to stay in us eternally. The love of His Name He grafts in our hearts so the attraction can grow. And we do come to a miracle our eyes cannot yet see, but our faith beholds..He returns in the Body and Blood of host and chalice- dependably! because He can't resist feeding us! Another magnetic power for our good and that of our neighbor: Jesus has the power of getting us to want what He wants.

When the Holy Ghost descends upon bread and wine, we are still drawn childlike to look toward the altar for maybe a glimpse of miracle...to see if we can see what's happening with such powerful love at work. The Holy Ghost interrupts our daily routine..stopping us in our tracks to be silent, or to listen, to hear His still small voice and.. to witness His tiny glories of converting souls we thought we knew. He moves us to come to church, to prayer at home, to heed the reminders that He really should be in our lives' driver's seats. And so He also loves us by hounding us ... by making side deals with our Guardian angel to alight more often. In short, we have a triune God whose divine persons collude all the time to provide FOR US...Thanks be to God!

