The miracle of the multiplication of loaves and fishes is a miracle that is repeated more often than any other in the gospels … twice in Matthew … twice in Mark and once in Luke and today … of course … we have St. John’s version. But St. John’s is a version that is **different** than the others … in a very **important** way. The other evangelists present the miracle as just one among many that Jesus performed but … John uses this miracle to introduce the mystery of Eucharist. And where the other evangelists present the institution of the Eucharist as the key event at the Last Supper, John makes no mention of it at the Last Supper. He, rather, takes an entire **chapter** … of his gospel to reveal the **depths** of this **gift** of the Lord … this gift of Himself … to **us** … in the Eucharist … a chapter that begins with a Passover one year **before** the Last Supper … a chapter that will be **continued** in our gospel readings … over the next four weeks.

The people are following Jesus … and they are listening to His teachings of course … but mostly … they are **astonished** by the **signs** He was working. So now … they are in the country … on a mountain … isolated … nowhere to buy food … and the people are hungry! So how many people were there? We don’t know! We are told there were five thousand men. I think we can safely assume that there were a significant number of women and possibly children there as well.. We know the story! The bottom line is … **Jesus** finds a way to feed them … and feed them with **abundance** … twelve wicker basketsful … and those are just the leftovers!

Now the meal may **not** have been the most appetizing to many of the people. Barley bread was coarse … the bread of the poor … and the fish were most likely the little sardines that were so abundant in the Sea of Galilee … not exactly a sumptuous feast. But it provided a nutritious meal and they ate their fill. It may not have been the meal they **wanted** … but it was the meal they **needed**.

And just as Jesus provided for the **bodily** needs of that crowd of people and satisfied their **physical** hunger … He provides for our **spiritual** needs. He provides the food we need to satisfy our spiritual **hunger**. And He does so with **abundance**!

He nourishes our souls with His very Body and Blood in the Eucharist so that … when we receive Communion … we enter into the most intimate union possible in this life … with Almighty God, Himself. Eucharist is, then, the most nutritious food for our souls there is. But there is yet more. Jesus provides much more for **us** and **our** spiritual hunger than just bread and fish. He provides for us a spiritually abundant banquet and **Eucharist** … as miraculous and spiritually nutritious as it is … is just the main course!

Hundreds of years before Jesus instituted Eucharist, His Heavenly Father fed the souls of mankind through His divine revelations through … Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and his sons … the patriarchs … through Moses … His great lawgiver … His judges like Samuel and finally … through His prophets like Elisha, whom we hear about today. Ultimately … this prelude to our main course of Eucharist
was set down in writing … for our consumption today … in the Sacred Scriptures of the Old Testament.

After Jesus ascended to His Father … He continued to feed us through the teachings of His Holy Church … through His Evangelists and Apostles and all the other early church fathers … culminating in the Sacred Scriptures of the New Testament. And for our Lord … who always provides in abundance … this was still not enough. He continues to feed us through His Holy Church … through its councils with their resulting documents … through the Churches doctors like Sts. Augustine and Ambrose … through it’s Catechism and proclamations and through the writings of its popes … their encyclicals. These latter-day prophets … like the prophets of old … feed us by clarifying God’s will and teachings … by bringing them into the context of current times and circumstances. God has always fed and continues to feed our spirits with all that is necessary for our spiritual health. He lays before us an abundant Spiritual banquet.

But we … are picky eaters. Too often we look at the spiritually healthy fare of God’s banquet and turn up our noses. We find what God wants to serve us … hard to swallow. Like spoiled children we say: “I don’t like that or … that doesn’t taste good!” … We prefer instead to pig out … on the junk food the culture of our world offers us … which tastes oh so pleasant but is not only … void of spiritual nutrition … but is so often … spiritual poison. We are told that these are the things that will fulfill us … that will satisfy our hunger. And maybe they do … for a brief time! But an hour later we’re hungry again! The truth is that only Christ and the food He offers can satisfy what our hearts truly hunger for. So if you feel like you are not being fed by Jesus or His Church perhaps … you need to take a hard look … at the source and the nature of your hunger… and a hard look at just what at just what you are being fed.