

Homily based on the readings from May 5, 2025 (Acts 6.8-15; John 6.22-29)

Whenever we are confronted with circumstances we do not understand – which, to be honest, is most of the time – human beings have a tendency to arrive at precisely the *wrong* conclusions. Today’s Gospel reading presents a perfect example of this phenomenon. After Jesus had fed the multitude of five thousand with only five loaves and two fish, the people who had witnessed this miracle simply would not leave him alone. Even though Jesus *literally* walked across the Sea of Galilee to get away from them, they came after him the next day by boat. What they were looking for, of course, was more bread. From their perspective, Jesus presented a practical solution to a lifelong problem – how to provide a steady supply of food for themselves and their loved ones.

Although – with the benefit of hindsight – we can see how *misguided* the crowd was, most of us would likely have done something similar in their place. What these people wanted was not *immoral* – they were simply

missing the point. The Gospels, in fact, are full of similar situations. For example, the Samaritan woman that Jesus met at Jacob's well – at least initially – just wanted an easier way to satisfy her *physical* thirst. At the Transfiguration, Saint Peter wanted to build a set of permanent dwellings for Jesus, Moses, and Elijah at the top of the mountain. It seems plausible, even though it is not recorded in Scripture, that some of the residents of Cana in Galilee wanted Jesus to stay in town and provide everyone with a lifetime supply of free wine. All of these desires are perfectly reasonable, from a human perspective, but they are not what God intended.

If we reflect for a moment, I am sure each of us can identify specific longings in our own lives that have been similarly misguided. I hope no one here will mind if I briefly mention an example from my *own* experience. As a young adult, before I was received into the Catholic Church, I had identified – more or less correctly – a number of serious problems with my former Protestant denomination. After praying for *years* that God would somehow make these issues go away, I finally

received a glimmer of insight. God did not need to change anything about my Protestant denomination, at least not on my account – what needed to change was *me*. The point, of course, is that God does not give us what we think we *want*, but what we actually *need*.

What we *need* is not an infinite supply of bread or an endless spigot of wine, but the saving power of Jesus Christ. That is exactly the message that Christ delivers to the hungry crowd: “[d]o not work for food that perishes but for the food that endures for eternal life.” As we will hear over the next several days, this “food that endures” is not a *what* but a *who*. Jesus is not just the *giver* of bread – he *is* the bread himself. That message not only defies the expectations of the crowd – it causes many of them to walk away despondent. Nevertheless, the bread that Christ provides – which we receive every time we come to the Table of the Lord – is a gift so precious, so powerful, so magnificent, that it eclipses any desire we could possibly have or any request we could possibly imagine. God *knows* what it is we need – and is ready, willing, and able to provide it. All *we* need to do is make room in our hearts to accept it.