

'HE BEGAN TO TEACH THEM'

CATHEDRAL EUCHARIST SERIES: PROLOGUE (MARK 6:30-34)

The last verse of This Week's Gospel reads as follows:

"When he disembarked and saw the vast crowd, his heart was moved with pity for them, for they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things."

This describes one of the central themes of Christ's ministry – to be a shepherd to his flock.

As our Shepherd, he wants to protect us, to comfort us, and to gather us together into communion with each other and with himself. To do this, he institutes the Eucharist – *but that comes later.*

For now, in the beginning, he teaches...

This Week's Gospel ends *just before* Mark begins his description of a very well-known event – a day when Jesus took five loaves of bread and two fish and miraculously fed five thousand people.

So if that's where this week *ends*, we should naturally expect to read Mark's account of that event *next* week, right?

Not quite.

Next week, we do start reading about Jesus feeding the five thousand, but we read it from the Gospel of John, Chapter 6. This is one of the most profound chapters in the entire Bible, and includes the incredible 'Bread of Life Discourse'. This chapter is *vitaly important* to understand as a Catholic.

For that reason, we are essentially going to do a multi-part Bible study right here in the Cathedral's

bulletin for the next five weeks (*starting next week*), as we shift from the Gospel of Mark to the Gospel of John. Throughout the chapter, we'll be exploring several aspects of the Biblical foundation of the Eucharist.

Over the next five weeks, we'll discuss the miracle of the 'manna from heaven', how the Bible uses something called 'typology' to foreshadow events, how *really paying attention* to the details of a story can reveal amazing clues which are critical to proper interpretation, and how all of this can strengthen our faith – not just in the Eucharist, but in everything.



Tune in each week – and if you love the Eucharist, *start saving these pages.*

We begin the adventure next week...

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THE BRIDGE

CATHEDRAL EUCHARIST SERIES: WEEK ONE (JOHN 6:1-15)

The Gospel of John, Chapter 6 is one of the most profound chapters in the entire Bible, and it contains several important keys to unlocking the mystery and the truth of the Eucharist.

The chapter begins with something that *seems* to be unrelated – an account of Jesus ‘feeding the five thousand’. We are all familiar with this event, because it is mentioned in all four Gospels. *But why is it in John's?*

John's Gospel was the last one to be written, and John often chose not to include events that were already fully documented in the earlier Gospels. Instead, John focused on explaining the *deeper meanings* behind what we already had available to us.

John likely included the feeding of the five thousand because it serves as a perfect bridge between the *Old Testament* gift of the ‘manna from heaven’ and the *New Testament* gift of the Eucharist.

In the Old Testament, God fed over a million people in the desert with the miraculous gift of ‘manna’ – a bread-like substance that had never been seen before. Now, in the New Testament, Jesus feeds thousands on a hillside – a miraculous ‘sign’ that echoes God's earlier gift of the manna.

This passage points *backwards* to the gift of the manna, but it also points *forward* to the Institution of the Eucharist by using a subtle hint. When Jesus takes the bread and ‘gives thanks’, John uses the same Greek word (*eucharisteo*) that is used in the Institution narratives.

Matthew, Mark, and Luke each spend about one chapter describing the Last Supper. John devotes *five full chapters* – but he never describes the Institution of the Eucharist on that night. *Why?* Because it had already been well-documented in the other three Gospels (*and in St. Paul's First*



Letter to Corinthians). Instead, John chose to give us *new* information so that we can make sense of what we have already read. For this reason, John documents the ‘Bread of Life Discourse’, which we start exploring next week.

Meanwhile, after Jesus feeds everyone, the people recognize the miracle and say:

“This is truly the Prophet, the one who is to come into the world.”

Jesus knew that they thought that he was the long-awaited Messiah (the Christ), but he also knew that they didn't understand what that *meant*.

“Since Jesus knew that they were going to come and carry him off to make him king, he withdrew again to the mountain alone.”

Many people thought that the Messiah would be a *military* ruler, someone that would ‘lead them to victory over the Romans’. But that's not why Jesus was there. Jesus *did* come to fight for them – but not to ‘free them from Roman rule’. Jesus came to do something *much greater* – to free them (and us) from the *clutches of sin*, and to *open up the doors of heaven*.

He came to offer each one of us a *personal miraculous gift* – the gift of *himself* – the Eucharist.

We continue next week...

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MANNA AND TYPES

CATHEDRAL EUCHARIST SERIES: WEEK TWO (JOHN 6:24-35)

In last week's Gospel reading, Jesus miraculously fed five thousand people. This Week's Gospel picks up the next day, as some of those people have tracked down and caught up with Jesus.

Jesus can sense why they are following him, and he tries to expand their thinking. First, he tells them that they aren't following him because of the *miracle*, but simply because they '*ate the loaves and were filled*'. He then encourages them to think bigger:

*"Do not work for food that perishes
but for the food that
endures for eternal life,
which the Son of Man will give you."*

At this point in the conversation, Jesus has not yet explained to them what this amazing food *is*, but he's about to...

Apparently the people have already forgotten the amazing miracle from yesterday, because they ask Jesus to give them a 'sign' – and then they immediately mention one of the most powerful miracles in their history – a miracle that is ingrained deep in the cultural mindset of the people – a miracle that they all understand: *the manna*.

*"Our ancestors ate manna in the desert,
as it is written: He [Moses] gave them
bread from heaven to eat."*

Jesus responds to their statement by clarifying that it wasn't Moses that gave them the manna (*past tense*), but his Father in heaven who gives them the true bread from heaven (*present tense*).

Then Jesus begins to describe the amazing food that he spoke of a few moments earlier:

*"For the bread of God is that which comes down
from heaven and gives life to the world."*

This must have stunned the people who were there. They plead with Jesus to give them this bread. At this point, Jesus makes a astonishing statement:

"I am the bread of life."



This is far more than just a bold statement – it creates a special link between the *manna* and *what Jesus is about to reveal*.

For those who study the Bible closely, this kind of connection is known as '*typology*', where a '*type*' is something important in the Old Testament that will be *enlarged*, *perfected*, and *fulfilled* by Christ in the New Testament.

In some cases, Bible scholars can be uncertain of whether something is truly a 'typological link between two things'. But not in this case. *Jesus Christ himself* made the link.

The manna is the 'type', and what Jesus is about to reveal – *the Bread of Life* – is the 'fulfillment'.

The manna that God gave to the people in the desert was a miracle that sustained their *natural* lives. But soon, in the next few passages, Jesus is about to enlarge, perfect, and fulfill this 'type' by offering us an *even greater* miracle – one which will benefit our *eternal* lives. The Eucharist.

We continue next week...

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ALWAYS MORE POWERFUL

CATHEDRAL EUCHARIST SERIES: WEEK THREE (JOHN 6:41-51)

This Week's Gospel opens as some of the people begin to argue with Jesus because he said that he '*came down from heaven*'. This friction should remind us of the Gospel from several weeks ago where Jesus said something that roughly translates to:

*"A prophet is honored everywhere -
except among his own family."*

Some of these people knew Jesus personally, and it blinded them. They rested in what they *thought* they knew, and they weren't open to listening to him and evaluating his words.

Luckily, we don't suffer that same problem – we have listened to what Jesus has said, and we have concluded that he is the Son of God (*with a fair share of help from the Holy Spirit*).

But have we truly listened to what he has said about the Bread of Life? Have we studied his words to create an unshakable confidence in the Eucharist – the very *pinnacle* of our faith? And if we have ever had others plant doubts within us, have we gone back to Jesus and just *listened*?

Last week, we explored what a Biblical 'type' is – something in the Old Testament that is enlarged, perfected, and fulfilled by Christ in the New Testament. Jesus *himself* established that he is the 'Bread of Life', the completion and fulfillment of the manna from heaven, the supernatural miracle that sustained millions of people in the desert for 40 years.

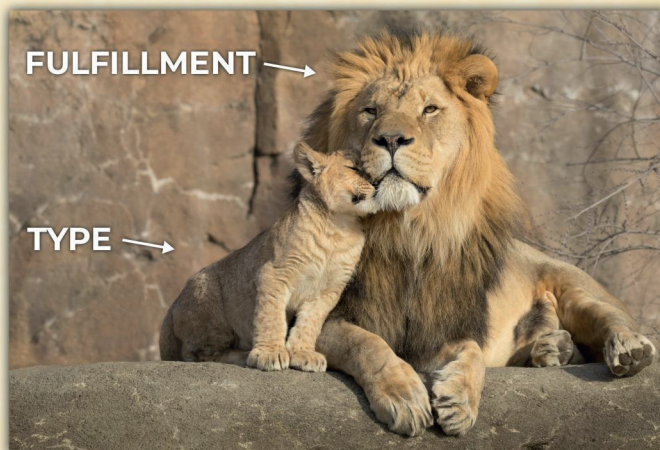
In this week's passage, Jesus emphasizes the 'enlargement' and 'perfection' aspect of this link when he says:

"Your ancestors ate the manna in the desert, but they died; this is the bread that comes down from heaven so that one may eat it and not die."

Jesus is explaining to them that one of the biggest miracles that they are aware of – *the manna* – had a limitation.

It was certainly a *miracle*, but it had not yet been *perfected* by Christ. Their ancestors ate the manna, and it *did* sustain them – but they eventually died. In contrast, the Bread of Life is *even more* powerful.

This is the case with all Biblical types. The types are only a *foreshadowing* of the eventual fulfillment by Christ – and the fulfillment is *always larger and more powerful than the original type*.



What does this tell us about the Bread of Life? If the manna was a *physical supernatural miracle* that God sent to sustain their ancestor's natural lives, then the fulfillment must be at least that strong. The Eucharist cannot be a simple metaphor or analogy, because then Christ's *fulfillment* would be weaker than the original *type*.

The Eucharist is a *physical supernatural miracle* that God offers to each of us in order to strengthen our *natural life* and it opens the door to *eternal life* with God in heaven.

Just wait until next week...

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A CRITICAL CLUE

CATHEDRAL EUCHARIST SERIES: WEEK FOUR (JOHN 6:51-58)

This Week's Gospel opens with Jesus saying:

*"I am the living bread ... and the bread that I will give **is my flesh** for the life of the world."*

This statement must have *shocked* those who were there that day. In fact, they quarreled among themselves, and said:

*"How can this man give us **his flesh** to eat?"*

But Jesus did not retract his words. Instead, his message became *even more direct (and disturbing)* to those who were listening. Several times, and in rapid succession, he talks about the need to eat his flesh and drink his blood. He even shifted from a 'polite' word for 'eat' to one that means 'to gnaw on' his flesh like a dog with a bone.

"Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life..."

To those listening, these words are utterly terrifying. In fact, as we will learn next week, many of his disciples actually *'returned to their former way of life and no longer accompanied him'*. This may seem like a sad footnote, but it's actually a critical key to understanding the entire chapter.

In those days, a disciple was more than just a 'student'. A disciple gave up *everything in their life* to follow Jesus. *Friends. Family. Livelihood. Hometown. Everything.*

A disciple spent *every waking hour* of *every single day* listening intently to everything that Jesus had to say – and some had been following him for *years*. So ask yourself:

Why did the disciples leave him?

The disciples left because *they knew he was speaking literally*. The disciples were *intimately* familiar with how he spoke. They knew that this was not some odd metaphor, or a difficult parable. The disciples had *given up everything* to follow him – sometimes *years* of their life – yet they left him. They recognized that he was speaking literally, and they couldn't accept the teaching.

Today, there are those who claim that we should interpret the Bread of Life discourse as 'a metaphor'. But who is more likely to know if Jesus was speaking literally or metaphorically? Would it be the disciples who *traveled* with him, had *sacrificed* to be with him, *knew his speech patterns*, and were actually *there*? Or would it be someone reading about the account *twenty centuries later*?

The disciples would not have left because of a 'bad metaphor'.



Jesus was planting a seed. He was describing the Eucharist – *literally* – to whoever was listening with faith. But his words wouldn't be *understood* by anyone – *including the Apostles* – until much later. Not until after the Last Supper, after the Passion, after the Resurrection...

In fact, the words are *still* a mystery, because even with all the wisdom of the Church to guide us, it's still difficult to understand how we can receive the Body and Blood of Christ – hidden under the appearance of 'mere' bread and wine. Still, *nothing is impossible with God*.

We conclude next week...

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OUR RESPONSE

CATHEDRAL EUCHARIST SERIES: WEEK FIVE (JOHN 6:60-69)

Over the last few weeks, we've seen Jesus feed *five thousand* people, and how that connects to the manna. We've explored how the manna is a 'type' of the Eucharist, and how the fulfillment *must* be larger than the original. We've watched as committed disciples turned away from Jesus and left, because they *knew* that he was speaking literally but they could not accept the teaching.

So now we come to the end of this amazing chapter, to a scene which is both sad and hopeful.

After the *crowd* leaves him, and after even the *disciples* leave him, Jesus walks over the Apostles and asks:

"Do you also want to leave?"

Peter, speaking for the Apostles, says:

*"Master, to whom shall we go?
You have the words of eternal life.*

*We have come to believe and are convinced
that you are the Holy One of God."*

Picture the scene. Peter and the rest are completely and utterly bewildered. They don't understand what has just happened. All they know is that they trust Jesus – and they need to follow him. Perhaps someday it will all make sense, and perhaps not – but they know they must follow. In Jesus they have found truth, and the words that will lead to eternal life – so they will follow.

Peter seems lost and confused, but his response is somehow confident and sure. And in this, Peter offers us an important lesson on how to approach the Eucharist – and our faith.

We may not understand how something is true, but we can still have confidence that it is true.

Why? Because we trust God's word.



We may not understand how the Eucharist is the Real Presence of Christ, but we can still have confidence that the Eucharist is the Real Presence of Christ.

We may not understand how Jesus will always forgive us, but we can still have confidence that Jesus will always forgive us.

We may not understand how God can fix us, but we can still have confidence that God can fix us.

*"Lord, I am not worthy that you
should enter under my roof,
but only say the word
and my soul shall be healed."*

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The complete series is at www.CathedralPB.com/Eucharist/