

Abundant Graces of the Eucharist

Homily for the Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Matthew 14:13–21

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Editor's Note

This transcript was prepared from an audio recording of Father Robert Gillelan's homily. Punctuation and paragraph breaks have been added for readability, and obvious transcription errors confirmed by the audio have been corrected. Every effort has been made to preserve Father Gillelan's exact words and intended meaning.

The gospel of the feeding of the 5000 plus has since ancient times been interpreted with the symbolism of the Eucharist and the abundant graces that flow from the Eucharist. Because Jesus fed all of these people and there was an abundance of food left over from twelve baskets.

This has been interpreted as a kind of foreshadowing of the super abundant graces flowing from the Eucharist. But what are those graces? And do they show up in our lives? It's a realistic question.

Where are the super abundant graces showing up in my life as a faithful Catholic who comes to Mass and receives Holy Communion maybe on a daily basis or on a weekly basis? Where were those abundant graces when Aunt Sofie, herself, a daily Mass communicant, got cancer and died?

Where were the abundant graces of the Eucharist then? Well, the abundant graces of the Eucharist are not ordered to preserve a human life. The abundant graces of the Eucharist are ordered to preparing us for eternal life.

And where were the abundant graces of the Eucharist when I failed my math test? Came to Mass on Sunday, received the Eucharist, went to school and failed my math test.

Where were the abundant graces then? Well, the Eucharist and its graces are not ordered towards a kind of intellectual prowess. These graces are ordered to spiritual strength.

How about my addiction? Why don't the abundant graces of the Eucharist wipe out my addiction? To anything. Fill in the blank. Whatever it is. Because the abundant graces of the Eucharist do not supplant human nature. In other words, Jesus will help us to beat it, but He's not going to do all the heavy lifting by Himself.

And where were all of the abundant graces of the Eucharist when I come on Wednesday to adoration? Adoring the Blessed Sacrament, Jesus in the Eucharist, grace is flowing and my mind is filled with dryness and distractions.

The graces of the Eucharist are not always ordered to comfort. Sometimes these graces are ordered to shake us up a bit and to test our faith.

When it comes to the abundant graces flowing from the Eucharist, we have great expectations. But we need to make sure that our great expectations are the right expectations.

The Catechism and our Church teaching would tell us that the graces flowing from the Eucharist, the fundamental graces flowing from the Eucharist would be these.

First of all, when we receive the Holy Eucharist, the grace that we receive is union. Union with Jesus Christ. Union, actual union. Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity.

As the Eastern Catholics would say, our souls become divinized. We actually share in the divine life of God Himself in the person of Jesus Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit. That should alone blow our minds, because we leave here every time changed.

So, the very first objective grace that we receive is union with our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. And because everyone in this church who receives Jesus in Holy Communion and becomes one with Him, we all become one with each other in the Body of Christ, even those people in here that we don't like so much.

Because we are invited and receive this union with Jesus, we are invited to communion. A communion with the teachings of Jesus.

This is why, you know, in the Church there can be such scandal regarding reception of Holy Communion. A reception of Holy Communion is a very

strong sign that those receiving it do, in fact, strive to live according to the teachings of Jesus Christ.

And so, it's scandalous when people live apart from those teachings and demand that, as we see in our world today, sometimes public figures demand that they be allowed to receive Holy Communion even when they are living apart from the teachings of Jesus Christ.

This is also the reason why we don't have what we call an open communion where we invite, for example, all of our Protestant brothers and sisters to receive Holy Communion. Because, when we receive Holy Communion, we are giving a sign of a communion with the teachings of Jesus.

And so, if they should receive in our church, or if we should receive in theirs, it can be seen as a false sign of a unity that does not truly exist. So, these are fundamental graces of unity and communion with the teachings of Jesus.

Another phenomenal grace is the deepening of love. Because Jesus is love.

And so, when we receive Him, we receive His love and His instruction on how to love God and one another. The greatest commandment.

And when you think about it, love is really the answer to every problem we ever have had, or ever will have.

Jesus doesn't always give us what we think we want or what we expect. As our psalm says, He gives us what we need. When we receive Him in Holy Communion, we are receiving love.

Finally, a fundamental grace that we receive is that of forgiveness. That's why Jesus died and gave Himself to us in the Eucharist.

So that He will forgive us our sins. You should know that actually receiving the Eucharist forgives our venial sins. When we come to Mass, we start with the penitential rite. If you've all brought your venial sins, they are all wiped out by the abundant grace of charity in the Eucharist.

Now, the mortal sins, you've got to go over there and see me in confession. But for your venial sins, Christ in His Sacred Body and Blood forgives them with the reception of Holy Communion.

So when you think about it, who could ask for anything more? When we receive Communion, we are receiving the abundant graces that Jesus knows that we need. We are united with Him spiritually in the depths of our souls,

which invites us to embrace His teachings and to live in communion with Him. And that's our way, our truth, and our life.

We receive His love and in return are asked to share that love with the world. We receive His forgiveness and are asked to be a forgiving people ourselves.

So let us think that when it comes to receiving abundant graces, it is true that God in the person of Jesus Christ will not be outdone in generosity. As our psalmist says so beautifully, the hand of the Lord feeds us, He gives us all we need.

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