

# EUCHARIST

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DISCOVERING THE MASS IN THE BIBLE

## STUDY GUIDE SESSION 6



LECTIO

UNVEILING SCRIPTURE AND TRADITION

BRANT PITRE

Nil Stat: Dr. Joseph E. Burns, Censor Deputatus

Imprimatur: Most Reverend Samuel J. Aquila, S.T.L. Archbishop of Denver, May, 2015.

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FORMED.org

AugustineInstitute.org

Printed in the United States of America

ISBN 978-0-9862288-1-0

# SESSION 6

## MIRACLES OF JESUS: WATER, WINE, LOAVES, AND FISHES



### OPENING PRAYER

Soul of Christ, sanctify me.  
Body of Christ, save me.  
Blood of Christ, inebriate me.  
Water from the side of Christ, wash me.  
Passion of Christ, strengthen me.  
O good Jesus, hear me.  
Within your wounds, conceal me.  
Do not permit me to be parted from you.  
From the evil foe, protect me.  
At the hour of my death, call me.  
And bid me come to you,  
to praise you with all your saints  
for ever and ever.  
Amen.

—“Anima Christi,” a prayer written by an unknown author in the early 14th century, and a favorite of St. Ignatius of Loyola, who included it in his *Spiritual Exercises*

### INTRODUCTION

In this session we turn from the Old Testament to the pages of the New Testament, and we begin to look at the words and deeds of Jesus during his public ministry. We'll review several miracles in the Gospels that not only display Jesus' divine power, but that could also be referred to as Eucharistic miracles—miracles that anticipate Jesus' gift of the Eucharist. But how do wedding feasts and bread fragments point forward to the Last Supper? Let's find out.



*The Marriage at Cana photo / Augustine Institute / All rights reserved.*



# CONNECT

1. Have you ever had an experience of overwhelming generosity? Perhaps you were a guest at someone's house and your host went above and beyond to make you feel comfortable. How did this hospitality make you feel? Can you remember a time when you went above and beyond to make someone feel welcomed or comfortable? What did you do, why did you do it, and how did it make you feel?

2. Holidays and celebrations often include food. Can you remember a time when a meal left you completely satisfied—not hungry but not too full? Is it easy or hard to achieve that perfect state of satisfaction? Explain.

3. Has something occurred in your life that has almost seemed too hard to believe? Was something so awe-inspiring or beautiful that you were certain it could never happen again? What was that experience? Has anything ever been able to compare?



# DISCUSS



## PART 1—THE WEDDING AT CANA

*Watch the teaching. The following is a brief outline of the topics covered in the video teaching.*

I. Jesus' Eucharistic miracles prefigure what he will accomplish at the Last Supper

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II. Jewish context of Eucharistic miracles

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A. New Moses—God will send a prophet like Moses (Deuteronomy 18:15–19)

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## B. Messianic Banquet (Isaiah 25:6–8)

1. Sacrificial feast including the best wine
2. All nations invited, at which God will destroy death forever
3. Banquet of salvation will be inaugurated by messiah

## III. Wedding Feast at Cana (John 2:1–11)

## A. First miracle of public ministry is changing water into wine

## B. “My hour has not yet come” (John 2:4)

1. “Hour” signifies the hour of his Passion
2. Jesus will perform a sign that points forward to the miracle he will accomplish when his hour does come

## C. Miracle of superabundance

1. Jesus uses water of Jewish purification
2. Jesus makes 180 gallons of wine

## D. Jesus takes role of the bridegroom in providing the wine

## E. Jesus as new Moses

1. Moses’ first plague in Egypt: water→blood
2. Jesus’ first sign at Cana: water→wine
3. Jesus at Last Supper: wine→blood
4. St. Cyril of Jerusalem – “Jesus once in Cana of Galilee turned water into wine by a word of command at Cana. Should we not believe him when he changes wine into his blood.”

## F. Role of Mary

1. “Do whatever he tells you”—abandonment and obedience to Christ
2. Invites Jesus to manifest power and take role of bridegroom
3. Mary is a woman of the Eucharist who leads us to the Eucharist, to her Son



## DISCUSS

1. What struck you the most in Dr. Pitre’s teaching on the wedding feast at Cana?

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*Watch the teaching. The following is a brief outline of the topics covered in the video teaching.*

- [illegible]

## III. Significance of the number of baskets

(Mark 8:14–21)

## A. For the 5,000: 5 loaves; 12 baskets left over

1. 12 baskets symbolize 12 tribes of Israel
2. Jesus is new Moses feeding Israel with new bread
3. Miracle takes place in Israelite territory

## B. For the 4,000: 7 loaves; 7 baskets left over

1. 7 baskets symbolize 7 Gentile nations in the land when Israelites came in to the Promised Land (Acts 13:19)
2. Jesus is a new (but different) Moses who feeds all nations, whole world
3. Miracle takes place in Gentile territory

## IV. Eucharistic miracles prefigure superabundance of Eucharist (CCC 1335)



*Ancient mosaic inside the Church of the Multiplication of the Loaves and the Fishes, Tabgha, Israel / Mihai-Bogdan Lazar / shutterstock.com*



## DISCUSS

5. What is the significance of the numbers in the two miracles of multiplication? What does the number twelve signify in the first miracle, and what does the number seven signify in the second? How does this varying number of baskets relate to Isaiah's prophecy in Isaiah 25:6–8?

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6. How is Jesus the “new Moses” in both the miracles of the wedding feast of Cana and the multiplication of loaves and fishes?

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7. How do the miracles of the multiplication of the loaves and fishes point forward to the Last Supper?

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EUCCHARISTĒSAS:—“give thanks” (Greek)

*“That bread, which you can see on the altar, sanctified by the word of God, is the body of Christ. That cup, or rather what the cup contains, sanctified by the word of God, is the blood of Christ. It was by means of these things that the Lord Christ wished to present us with his body and blood, which he shed for our sake for the forgiveness of sins. If you receive them well, you are yourselves what you receive. You see, the apostle says, We, being many, are one loaf, one body (1 Cor. 10.17). That’s how he explained the sacrament of the Lord’s Table; one loaf, one body, is what we all are, many though we be.”*

—St. Augustine, Sermon 227

## MEMORY VERSE

*“Do whatever he tells you.” —John 2:5*



## CLOSING PRAYER

Lord God, we thank you for the Eucharistic miracles you worked during your ministry on earth, and for the ongoing miracle of the Eucharist you give us at each Mass. We praise you for the superabundance of grace, love, and mercy in this Holy Sacrament. Help us to share your superabundance in a world starved of hope and true joy. Mary, may your words at the wedding feast of Cana, “Do whatever he tells you,” resound in our hearts. Give us the strength to follow your motherly instruction. We pray this in the name of your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

## FOR FURTHER READING

Fr. Robert Barron, *Eucharist: Catholic Spirituality for Adults*, (Orbis Books, 2008)



# COMMIT—DAY 1

## THE FEEDING OF THE FIVE THOUSAND



As Dr. Pitre discussed in his teaching, the account of the feeding of the five thousand appears in all four Gospels: Matthew 14:13–21, Mark 6:33–44, Luke 9:10–17, and John 6:1–14. As we have already seen in previous sessions, Jesus' miracle of the multiplication of the loaves and fishes was not the first time God intervened to satisfy his people. When Israel hungered in the desert on her way to Mount Sinai, God provided manna for his people, and he continued to provide this miraculous bread during their long forty years of wandering.

Let's take a look at some of the similarities between the feeding with manna and Jesus' feeding of the five thousand. Answer the following questions in the chart on the next page.



*The Feeding of the Five Thousand / Erich Lessing / Art Resource, NY*

Where are they? Look up Exodus 16:1 for manna, and either Matthew 14:13, 15 or Mark 6:35 or Luke 9:12 for multiplication.

What is wrong, or what do they need? Look up Exodus 16:2–3 for manna, and either Matthew 14:15 or Mark 6:36 or Luke 9:12 or John 6:5 for multiplication.

What is provided for the people? Look up Exodus 16:4, 13, 15, 35 for manna, and either Matthew 14:17–19 or Mark 6:41 or Luke 9:16 or John 6:11 for multiplication.

In both stories, the food is gathered up. We're not told into what in Exodus. Into what container is the food gathered in the multiplication? Look up either Matthew 14:20 or Mark 6:43 or Luke 9:17 or John 6:12–13 for multiplication.

How much is gathered (each day for manna; excess at end for multiplication)? Look up Exodus 16:4, 16 for manna, and either Matthew 14:20 or Mark 6:43 or Luke 9:17 or John 6:13 for multiplication.

How satisfied were the people? Look up Exodus 16:18 for manna, and either Matthew 14:20 or Mark 6:42 or Luke 9:17 or John 6:12 for multiplication.

	Manna	Jesus' Multiplication
Where are they?		
What's wrong or needed?		
What provided?		
Gathered into?		
How much gathered?		
How satisfied?		

Interestingly, not only the bread but the fish also recalled the Exodus. Look up the following verses. How are the quail described?

Wisdom 19:7–12 \_\_\_\_\_

Numbers 11:22 \_\_\_\_\_

Numbers 11:31 \_\_\_\_\_

In addition we see God's divine provision in his use of his earthly servants in both stories. Look up Exodus 16:8–10. Who provides the bread? And who does God use to reveal and explain his gift to the people?

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Now look up Matthew 14:19. Who provides the bread? And who does Jesus use to give the food to the people? How do these roles compare with the Exodus?

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The many similarities between God's feeding of the Israelites in the desert and Jesus' multiplying the loaves and fishes would not have been lost on the crowd. The Jews knew very well the many prophecies that anticipated a new Exodus. The prophet Isaiah alludes to this new Exodus often in his writings, speaking of the "new thing" that God would do when he made a new "way in the wilderness" and "rivers in the desert" (see Isaiah 43:19).

Look up the following verses. How will the new Exodus compare to the first Exodus from Egypt?

	NEW Exodus	FIRST Exodus
Isaiah 40:3–4		people wander the desert (Num 32:13)
Isaiah 41:18		people thirsted for water (Ex 17:1–3)
Isaiah 52:12		people leave in haste (Ex 12:33)
Isaiah 52:12		pillar of cloud went before/behind (Ex 13:21, 14:19)

How could there be a new Exodus without a new Moses? Moses had foretold that “the LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you” (Deuteronomy 18:15). Just as the people anticipated a new Exodus, they also anticipated a new Moses to lead it. That Jesus is a new Moses was already evident from so many events in his life up to this point.

	Moses	Jesus
Born during reign of a ruthless king	Pharaoh	Herod the Great
Reigning king killed children	Hebrew firstborn males	Infants in Bethlehem
Each finds safety in Egypt	Raised in royal house	Flees to Egypt
Each fasts 40 days and nights	Up on Mount Sinai	After Jordan baptism
Goes up a mountain, teaches new law	Mount Sinai	Sermon on the Mount

Many in the crowd at Jesus’ multiplication of the loaves and fishes may have been unaware of these earlier similarities. But even without knowledge of these, the crowd was convinced upon seeing “the **sign** which he had done” (emphasis added). God had given Moses two “signs” to perform before Pharaoh (see Exodus 4:9). And it was at Moses’ word that God worked “signs and wonders” in Egypt (see Exodus 7:2–3). And when the people were hungry in the desert, it was at Moses’ word that manna appeared to feed a multitude for forty years. Moses was a miracle worker, a worker of signs. So it shouldn’t surprise us that “when the people saw the sign which [Jesus] had done,” their logical conclusion would be, “This is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world!” (John 6:14).

If the multiplication of the loaves and fishes reminds us of the first Exodus and helps to reveal Jesus as the “new Moses,” then we should expect a “new exodus.” But rather than an exodus that saves from physical slavery, this new exodus would save God’s people, each of us, from our slavery to sin. This is what Jesus does—saves us from our sin and feeds us with the bread of angels. God writes signs into history (Moses, the Exodus from slavery, manna, etc.) and then fulfills them in his Son (Jesus the new Moses, exodus from sin through baptism, multiplication of bread and ultimately feeding us with the Eucharist) so that we won’t miss all that he has done out of love for us, and so that we might have faith and turn in love to him.



*Multiplication of the loaves and fish / Scala / Art Resource, NY*





# COMMIT – DAY 2

## THE FEEDING OF THE FOUR THOUSAND



*Ancient mosaic inside the Church of the Multiplication of the Loaves and the Fishes, Tabgha, Israel / Mihai-Bogdan Lazar / shutterstock.com*

There are numerous times throughout the gospels that the disciples did not understand Jesus' work, actions, or teaching. Jesus often had to sit down with them to reveal the deeper meaning of his parables (see Matthew 13:36), or, for example, to explain why they were unable to heal the epileptic (see Matthew 17:13–20).

The feeding of the four thousand in Mark 8 presents one of these times when the disciples have trouble understanding Jesus and the

mighty deeds of his ministry. When another great crowd gathers, Jesus' disciples begin to doubt the power of God. Although the disciples witnessed the feeding of the five thousand (Mark 6), they appear incredulous that bread and fish could be multiplied a second time, saying, "How can one feed these men with bread here in the desert?" (Mark 8:4). "How" is hardly the question, as the disciples know how, having already witnessed Jesus do this very thing.

To their disbelief, Jesus feeds the crowd, multiplying the bread and fish such that once again there are leftovers to be collected. Departing the area by boat, the apostles' discussion reveals their lack of understanding both regarding the multiplication miracle and Jesus' warning about the Pharisees and Herod.

Turn to Mark 8:17–18. What metaphor does Jesus use to describe the disciples' lack of understanding?

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Equating "seeing" and "hearing" with "understanding" finds its roots in the Old Testament, and is a favorite image among the prophets. Look up the following verses. How is seeing and hearing related to understanding and wisdom?

Deuteronomy 29:1–4 \_\_\_\_\_

Isaiah 6:9–10 \_\_\_\_\_

Jeremiah 5:21 \_\_\_\_\_



The disciples are not physically blind, but they are spiritually blind. And as if to drive home the message of their blindness, in the very next scene of Mark's gospel, Jesus will heal a blind man. Read Mark 8:22–25. The blind man in this account isn't healed with a simple command of Jesus. What does it take for this man to regain his sight?

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*Christ healing the blind* © RMN-Grand Palais / Art Resource, NY

Like the blind man from Bethsaida who is healed in two stages, Jesus' disciples are going to go from spiritual blindness to sight, from not-understanding to understanding, in stages also. Many Jews looked for a messiah who would retake the throne of David, re-gather Israel, and throw off the yoke of the Roman Empire. A messiah who would suffer and die upon a cross was far from their expectations, as is clear in Mark 8 when Peter rebukes Jesus' assertion that "the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again" (Mark 8:31–32).

When Peter rebukes Jesus, it is the first time that Jesus reveals the suffering that lies ahead. But as they make their way from Galilee to Jerusalem, Jesus repeatedly teaches his apostles that he will be betrayed (Mark 14:41), suffer and die (Mark 9:12, 31; 10:33) and give his life as a ransom (Mark 10:45). Slowly the blindness leaves the disciples. They understand that Jesus' death will throw off the greater yoke of sin, destroy death, and restore not only Israel (represented by the twelve leftover loaves of the feeding of the five thousand) but also gather all the nations (represented by

the seven loaves leftover from the feeding of the four thousand) into the family of God. Early on in Jesus' ministry there was much that the disciples didn't understand, that they saw only in shadows, much like the blind man who saw trees walking instead of men. They didn't fully recognize Jesus' divinity and thus couldn't comprehend that a second miraculous multiplication was possible. They couldn't understand the suffering that was necessary for salvation, or that the true bread, the one loaf that they needed, was Jesus himself.

Many times we feel like the disciples, unable to make sense of the work of God in our own lives, unable to see and understand what God is doing. The prophet's words ring all too true: "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, says the LORD" (Isaiah 55:8). Yet Jesus did not fail to sit patiently with his disciples, again and again, and teach the meaning behind his words and deeds so they could see and understand. Jesus' pedagogical method with these first and closest disciples is comforting, as he desires to use this same method in our own lives.

In his homily on the Solemnity of Corpus Christi, Pope Francis used the miracle of multiplication to discuss the importance of following the voice of Jesus wherever he leads, of receiving the gift of Jesus in the Eucharist, of opening ourselves to be transformed by Christ, and being willing to then give to others. He says,

*"Where does the multiplication of the loaves come from? The answer lies in Jesus' request to the disciples: 'You give them...', 'to give,' to share. What do the disciples share? The little they have: five loaves and two fish. However it is those very loaves and fish in the Lord's hands that feed the entire crowd. And it is the disciples themselves, bewildered as they face the insufficiency of their means, the poverty of what they are able to make available, who get the people to sit down and who—trusting in Jesus' words—distribute the loaves and fish that satisfy the crowd. And this tells us that in the Church, but also in society, a key word of which we must not be frightened is 'solidarity,' that is, the ability to make what we have, our humble capacities, available to God, for only in sharing, in giving, will our life be fruitful.*

*"Jesus...gives himself to us in the Eucharist, shares in our journey, indeed he makes himself food, the true food that sustains our life also in moments when the road becomes hard-going and obstacles slow our steps. And in the Eucharist the Lord makes us walk on his road, that of service, of sharing, of giving; and if it is shared, that little we have, that little we are, becomes riches, for the power of God—which is the power of love—comes down into our poverty to transform it."*

—Pope Francis, Solemnity of Corpus Christi, May 2013

When "the road becomes hard-going and obstacles slow our steps," it can be difficult to see and understand what God is doing in our lives. It is then that we need to "see" Jesus in the Eucharist, receive him, stop and spend time with him, and allow him to share more intimately in our journey.

# COMMIT—DAY 3

## LECTIO: THE WEDDING AT CANA



Wedding at Cana, Scrovegni Chapel, Padua, Italy / shutterstock.com

At the wedding at Cana, Mary perceives a need and intercedes. She places her faith in her Son and entrusts the rest to him. As St. John Paul II once reflected, “Faced with the lack of wine, Mary could have sought some human solution to the problem at hand, but she does not hesitate to turn immediately to Jesus: ‘They have no wine’ (John 2:3).” Let’s turn with Mary to Jesus in his Word in the Gospel of John.

**LECTIO:** The practice of praying with Scripture, *lectio divina*, begins with an active and close reading of the Scripture passage. Read John 2:1–11. Then answer the questions to take a closer look at some of the details of the passage.

*“On the third day there was a marriage at Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there; Jesus also was invited to the marriage, with his disciples. When the wine failed, the mother of Jesus said to him, ‘They have no wine.’ And Jesus said to her, ‘O woman, what have you to do with me? My hour has not yet come.’ His mother said to the servants, ‘Do whatever he tells you.’ Now six stone jars were standing there, for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. Jesus said to them, ‘Fill the jars with water.’ And they filled them up to the brim. He said to them, ‘Now draw some out, and take it to the steward of the feast.’ So they took it. When the steward of the feast tasted the water now become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the steward of the feast called the bridegroom and said to him, ‘Every man serves the good wine first; and when men have drunk freely, then the poor wine; but you have kept the good wine until now.’ This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory; and his disciples believed in him.”*

—John 2:1–11

On what day does the wedding at Cana take place?



Who does Scripture say is present at this wedding? Why is it important that Jesus' disciples were present?

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What is Mary's reaction when she learns that "the wine failed"? What do her words and actions, both to Jesus and to the servants, tell us about her?

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After Mary informs Jesus that there is no wine, how does Jesus refer to his mother? St. John will record another time, at the end of his gospel, when Jesus refers to his mother in the same way. Look up John 19:26–27. What is happening in this second passage, and how does Jesus refer to his mother?

How much water does Jesus turn into wine? How many bottles of wine would this be?

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**MEDITATIO:** *Lectio*, close reading and rereading, is followed by *meditatio*, time to reflect on the Scripture passage, to ponder the reason for particular events, descriptions, details, phrases, and even echoes from other Scripture passages that were noticed during *lectio*. Take some time now to meditate on John 2:1–11. Here is a short reflection from Pope Benedict XVI's book *Jesus of Nazareth* to help you get started.

*"The miracle of Cana seems at first sight to be out of step with the other signs that Jesus performs. What are we supposed to make of the fact that Jesus produces a huge surplus of wine—about 520 liters—for a private party? We need to look more closely to realize that this is not at all about a private luxury, but about something much greater. ... The sign of God is overflowing generosity. We see it in the multiplication of the loaves; we see it again and again—most of all, though, at the center of salvation history, in the fact that he lavishly spends himself for the lowly creature, man. This abundant giving is his 'glory.' The superabundance of Cana is therefore a sign that God's feast with humanity, his self-giving for men, has begun. The framework of the event, the wedding, thus becomes an image that points beyond itself to the messianic hour: The hour of God's marriage feast with his people has begun in the coming of Jesus. The promise of the last days enters into the Now."*

—Pope Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth*

St. John begins his gospel with the words, "In the beginning," recalling the opening words of the book of Genesis, and he continues with a series of "days." John the Baptist appears as the long-awaited Elijah (see Malachi 4:5) on the first day. The following three days are each marked with the phrase "the next day" (John 1:29, 35, 43). When we arrive at John 2:1 and hear "on the third day" and add up the accumulation of these "days," we find ourselves on day seven. St. John reworks the seven-day creation story in Genesis, showing us that Jesus is inaugurating a "new creation." The inauguration of this new creation finds its culmination at the end of time in the book of Revelation.



Look up the following verses. What do they say about the new creation? How did Jesus make you a new creation at your baptism? What area of your life is he working on now to make it new?

Revelation 21:1–5 \_\_\_\_\_

2 Corinthians 5:17 \_\_\_\_\_

After Adam and Eve sin, the first hint of a savior is given in Genesis 3:15 when God says, “I will put enmity between you and **the woman**, and between your seed and her seed; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel” (emphasis added). And when God hands out our first parents’ punishment, the narrator describes God’s words to Eve as being said “to the woman.” As Dr. Pitre noted, Jesus is not insulting Mary when he refers to her as “woman” in John 2. Instead he uses the title, as will the Apostles Paul and John in their writings, to show Mary as the new Eve who marks the time of salvation and Jesus’ hour. Look up the following verses. How does Paul use the term “woman” to refer to Mary in Galatians 4:4–5? Who is the woman in Revelation 12:1–5, and who is she mother of in Revelation 12:17?

Galatians 4:4–5 \_\_\_\_\_

Revelation 12:1–5 \_\_\_\_\_

Revelation 12:17 \_\_\_\_\_

What might you do to have a more tender and loving devotion to Mary as your mother?

The first creation culminates in the marriage union of Adam and Eve (see Genesis 2:24). In John’s gospel we also find ourselves on day seven at a wedding feast, this time in Cana. As Dr. Pitre described, Jesus makes it clear that his hour has not yet come, but when it does arrive on the Cross, he will take on the role of the Bridegroom, laying down his life for his bride, and changing bread and wine into his own flesh and blood in the Eucharist to provide for her nourishment. That Jesus intends to take on this role of the Bridegroom is clear in Revelation. Recalling John the Baptist’s words that Jesus is the “lamb of God,” look up the following verses. Who is the Bridegroom described in these verses?

Revelation 19:7 \_\_\_\_\_

Revelation 21:9 \_\_\_\_\_

What appears at first as a simple gesture of kindness for the married couple at Cana, is in fact a rich metaphor anticipating what Jesus the Bridegroom is about to do for his bride at the Last Supper, the Cross and eternally in the heavenly banquet. Let’s close our meditation with the words of St. Augustine, who after recalling God’s works in creation then reflects on the miracle of turning water into wine at Cana saying,

*“When we see, therefore, such deeds wrought by Jesus God, why should we wonder at water being turned into wine by the man Jesus? For He was not made man in such manner that He lost His being God. Man was added to Him, God not lost to Him. This miracle was wrought by the same who made all those things. Let us not therefore wonder that God did it, but love Him because He did it in our midst, and for the purpose of our restoration. ...”*

—St. Augustine, *Homilies on the Gospel of John*



# COMMIT – DAY 4

## A BANQUET OF FINEST FOODS



Moses and the burning bush / Alfredo  
Dagli Orti / Art Resource, NY

At the time of Jesus' birth, the situation of the Jews seemed rather dismal. Though they were no longer in exile, they remained subject to the Roman Empire. The Romans tolerated the Jews and their way of life, allowing their Temple system and traditions to continue relatively unaffected as long as taxes were paid. For the Jews, however, this was less than ideal. They had no viable king from the line of David, no political independence, and no return of the presence of God to the Temple.

In this difficult situation, God's people waited on the Lord. Waited for him to send the prophet promised by Moses. Waited for him to send the messianic king from the line of David. And waited for the messianic banquet prophesied by Isaiah.

*"On this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of fat things, a feast of wine on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wine on the lees well refined. And he will destroy on this mountain the covering that is cast over all peoples, the veil that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death for ever, and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth; for the LORD has spoken. It will be said on that day, 'Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, that he might save us. This is the LORD; we have waited for him; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.' For the hand of the LORD will rest on this mountain..."*

—Isaiah 25:6–10a

Let's take a closer look at Isaiah's prophecy. Where was this banquet to take place?

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What was on the menu?

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What was God going to do for his people?

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Who was invited?

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*'Preparation of a Hebraic feast' © DeA Picture Library / Art Resource, NY*

Isaiah's prophecy of a great banquet recalls several key meals in the Old Testament. First, the Passover meal in Exodus 12, which not only spared Israel from the angel of death, but also anticipated the victorious release of God's people from slavery in Egypt. Exodus 12:11 called this meal "the LORD's Passover," indicating that God himself was the host. Second, the covenant meal in Exodus 24, where Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abi'hu, and the seventy elders of Israel beheld God, and ate and drank. This meal took place not in Egypt, like the first Passover, but "on the mountain," this time on Mount Sinai. Third, it recalls the provision of the miraculous food and drink in the desert, where God provides "food in abundance" for his people—manna, quail, and water from the rock—feeding them with "the bread of the angels" that provided "every pleasure and [was] suited to every taste" (see Psalm 78:23–25 and Wisdom 16:20).

Elements of these three meals are drawn up in Isaiah's anticipated messianic banquet. God will be the host of this new feast: "On this mountain the LORD of hosts will make ... a feast." God will be victorious over his enemies, destroying "the covering that is cast over all peoples" and taking away the "reproach of his people." God will bring salvation, and in particular, salvation from death, "swallow[ing] up death for ever." And he will provide a banquet of finest foods, "a feast of fat things, a feast of wine on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wine on the lees well refined."





*The Marriage at Cana photo / Augustine Institute / All rights reserved.*

Mary's words at the wedding in Cana, "They have no wine," not only reveal a need at that wedding, but also recall Isaiah's prophecy and the Jewish anticipation of the Lord's provision of the finest wine. While Jesus steps in for the groom at Cana and provides a superabundance of the best wine for the couple and their guests, it will not be until his "hour has come" that he fully takes on the role of the Bridegroom

and host, and provides the wine anticipated by Isaiah's prophecy. Jesus reveals himself as the Bridegroom at the Cross, where he defeats death and is victoriously resurrected in glory. His death opens the waters of baptism, which takes away the reproach of original sin. And the victory feast, the wedding feast of the Bridegroom at the end time, is anticipated at every Eucharist, where God feeds us with the finest food, the bread of his Body and the wine of his Blood.

During the course of the Church's liturgical year, we read the Old Testament passage from Isaiah 25:6–10a on the Twenty-Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time. And in her wisdom the Church matches Isaiah's prophecy with Psalm 23 and Matthew 22. In Psalm 23 the Lord shepherds his people, protecting them from the valley of the shadow of death and leading them to rich green pastures where he provides a table for them, much like he did in saving Israel from the angel of death and leading her to the Promised Land, flowing with milk and honey. As he shepherded his people in the Old Testament, so he leads each of us through the valley of our lives to the table set for us in heaven. In Matthew 22:1–14, Jesus tells the parable of the king who throws a wedding feast for his son, and who fills the banquet hall with guests from the streets when the original invitees refuse to show up. At our baptism we are given the white wedding garment so that we may enter the banquet hall and partake of the Eucharist at each Mass, and the wedding feast of the Lamb at the end of time.

In the Prayer After Communion on the Twenty-Eighth Sunday, the Church prays: "We entreat your majesty most humbly, O Lord, that, as you feed us with the nourishment which comes from the most holy Body and Blood of your Son, so you may make us sharers of his divine nature." May we worthily partake of every Eucharist so that we may deepen our share in the very life of Christ.



# COMMIT – DAY 5

## TRUTH AND BEAUTY



**Mosaic of Fish and Loaves, from Church of the Multiplication,  
Tabgha, Holy Land, Israel, c. 5th century**



*Ancient mosaic inside the Church of the Multiplication of the Loaves and the Fishes, Tabgha, Israel / Mihai-Bogdan Lazar / shutterstock.com*

In the Holy Land, the Church of the Multiplication is located along the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee in the area known as Tabgha, just a mile and a half west of the city of Capernaum. The location's name, Tabgha, is an Arabic corruption of the older Greek name *Heptapegon*, meaning seven springs. The area along the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee was known for its many warm springs, which fed the sea and attracted fish in the cold months of the year. Along the short distance of this northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee, Jesus healed the paralytic, preached the Sermon on the Mount, broke bread with his disciples after his resurrection, and multiplied loaves and fish to feed a multitude. From early on, Christians venerated each of these locations. At Tabgha, this included venerating the very rock on which Jesus placed the loaves and fish.



*Sea of Galilee in the early morning, ripples on the water and clouds in the sky © vblinov / shutterstock.com*

The fourth-century pilgrim Egeria records, “Not far away from there (Capernaum) are some stone steps where the Lord stood. And in the same place by the sea is a grassy field with plenty of hay and many palm trees. By them are seven springs, each flowing strongly. And this is the field where the Lord fed the people with the five loaves and two fishes. In fact the stone on which the Lord placed the bread has now been made into an altar. People who go there take away small pieces of the stone to bring them prosperity, and they are very effective.” The veneration of this site included the building of a small chapel in the fourth century, followed by a larger church and monastery in the fifth century. These buildings likely fell victim to the Persian or Arab invasions and conquests of Palestine, as the Gallic bishop Arculf records no remaining buildings in Tabgha in his pilgrimage journal from 670 AD.

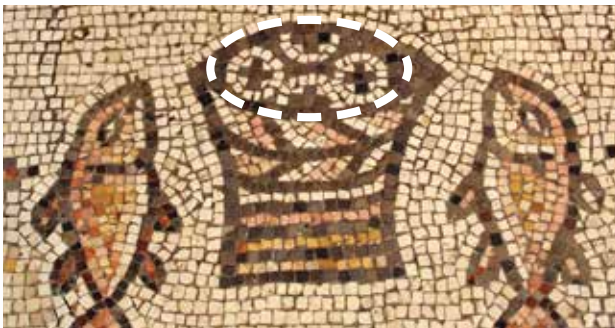


*The Church of the Multiplication of the Loaves and the Fishes, Tabgha, Israel photo / Augustine Institute / All rights reserved.*

Over the centuries, several feet of silt and dirt covered the remains of these early sanctuaries. It was not until archeological excavations in 1932 that this debris was removed to reveal the remains of these earlier churches. Then in the 1980s, a new church was built to the Byzantine form, incorporating portions of the original exquisite fifth-century mosaics. But the most cherished was the humble mosaic of the loaves and fishes.

In the following verse, how many loaves and fish does Jesus start with?

Matthew 14:17 \_\_\_\_\_



*The Church of the Multiplication of the Loaves and the Fishes © Zvonimir Atletic / shutterstock.com*

Take a look at the close-up of the mosaic. How many loaves and fishes appear in the mosaic?

While it is impossible to know the exact intent of the artist, the mosaic's location in the church can give us a clue as to the missing fifth loaf in the mosaic's basket. The mosaic is located just before the rock that is venerated as the place where Jesus placed the five loaves and two fish. Over this rock, and incorporated to it, is the church's altar. It is upon this altar that bread will be laid for the Eucharistic celebration. Could the missing loaf in the mosaic be the loaf that will be placed upon the altar and changed into the body of Christ?



*The Church of the Multiplication of the Loaves and the Fishes © Augustine Institute / All rights reserved.*

The *Catechism* reminds us, “The miracles of the multiplication of the loaves, when the Lord says the blessing, breaks and distributes the loaves through his disciples to feed the multitude, prefigure the superabundance of this unique bread

of his Eucharist” (CCC 1335). With its four loaves, this simple ancient mosaic points to the altar upon which what was prefigured is enacted and fulfilled at every Mass.



## SESSION 6

## MIRACLES OF JESUS: WATER, WINE, LOAVES, AND FISHES

Take a moment to journal your ideas, questions, or insights about this lesson. Write down thoughts you had that may not have been mentioned in the text or the discussion questions. List any personal applications you got from the lessons. What challenged you the most in the teachings? How might you turn what you've learned into specific action?

This image shows a single sheet of cream-colored paper with horizontal ruling lines. The paper has a slightly textured appearance and is set against a dark background. There are 20 horizontal lines in total, evenly spaced across the page. The lines are a light gray or blue color. The paper is oriented vertically.

## SESSION 6

## MIRACLES OF JESUS: WATER, WINE, LOAVES, AND FISHES

This image shows a single sheet of cream-colored paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.