

Catholics are well known for the Mass, the rosary, the pope, and our stand on moral issues. But if you're familiar with any typical Catholic parish, you know the main characteristic of every Catholic function is food. We have potlucks, dinners, coffee and donuts, snacks at meetings, and treats in our schools. It's a miracle we never run out. I learned the secret of abundant food by hanging around the St. Regis kitchen. The cooks say, "If you want to make sure there's plenty of food for any parish function, always serve peas." After everyone's eaten their fill, there will always be peas in the buffet line. If you've worked in the kitchen here, you've probably heard this.

I'm convinced the real miracle of the multiplication of the loaves is that no peas were involved and people still had enough to eat. Ordinarily on Sundays this year we feature Mark's gospel. Last week Jesus began to teach the crowd on the other side of the lake. What follows in Mark's story is the multiplication of the loaves, but today we set Mark aside and open up John at the same point in the story, chapter 6, where we'll be for the next five weeks. One reason we do this is that every three years we feature <sup>2 days Gospel</sup> Matthew, Mark, and then Luke; John comes up every year during Lent and Easter, so this gives us another opportunity to hear from him. Another reason we change from Mark to John for a few weeks is that Mark's Gospel is too short to make it to the end of the year. So the church pumps it up a little bit with some air from John at this point. And it's wonderful, because John 6 is one of the greatest chapters in the Bible.

When Jesus gives bread to the crowd he symbolizes his desire to feed them spiritually. His words are food for their souls. When he speaks they feel satisfied. The words of Jesus are like that basket of loaves. No matter how often you feed from them, there will always be plenty. No matter how many people feed from them, there will always be plenty, just like peas. A basket of loaves sits in every home in this parish--it's the Bible. Jesus invites us in our homes to help ourselves from the words of life. And you know yourselves--no matter how often we go back to the word of God, it will satisfy our every hunger. If we read the Sunday scriptures at home before coming to Mass, if we read the Bible in the morning or the evening, or with meals at home, we may feast endlessly on the words of Jesus.