Children
You may not know it, but the Bible we read is abridged, and I happen to have a copy of the unabridged Bible. Sometimes, it gives you a little more information. You've heard today's gospel, and now I'm going to give you the rest of the story.

Jesus told his apostles to feed the people, and immediately, Jesus' parish council got together and looked at the budget, and there wasn't enough money there. So they wanted Jesus, the pastor, to cancel the event. Some council members thought, well, we can cut back, and we can do more with less; in other words, give everybody a morsel of the bread they had. It would have been like taking a piece of bread and breaking off out of one piece of bread 100 little pieces. You can't call a little piece of bread lunch. They came up with other suggestions, like telling the people to go into town and buy their own food, but the nearest village was miles away. Another member of Jesus's parish council called Andrew and said pastor, we have a young boy here who's got five loaves and two fish. Maybe that can help out. The other parish council members knew that this small portion would not provide enough food for people to eat. But Andrew brought this young boy named Solomon, and we'll hear more about him next week. He didn't keep anything for himself. He gave everything to Jesus.

What happened? Jesus was able to feed the multitude. See, all of us have some gifts, some talents, some abilities, and when we offer them to Jesus, he does great things with them. You see, here are altar servers. They give their time and talent to serve this community and Jesus. Servers, young people in the choir, and those who serve to set things up for mass are giving to Jesus. Sometimes, or probably most of the time, they don't realize what they're getting back. They are learning new things. They are experiencing new things to do, especially in front of people, which is tough. So the story's moral is that whatever you give to Jesus he multiplies.

1 With permission of Fr Joseph Pelligrino additions were made by me.

This Sunday we begin the deep dive into the Sixth chapter of the Gospel of John. This is the chapter on the Eucharist. John 6 begins with the multiplication of the loaves and fish. What again? The multiplication of loaves and fish is the only Gospel miracle found in all four gospels and is actually found twice in the Gospels of Mark and Matthew. So, we come upon it quite frequently in our liturgies.

This Sunday’s reference to the loaves and fish is an introduction to the gospel’s teaching on the Bread of Life. Everything in this account has particular meaning. Jesus goes up a mountain to teach just as instructions from Moses and Elijah came from a mountain. The feast of Passover is near. Jesus provides physical food here, but on another feast of Passover he will provide the Bread of Life. Jesus has the people recline on the grass like the sheep led to verdant pastures in Psalm 23. After the people eat, Jesus has his disciples gather up the remnants of the bread. They fill up twelve wicker baskets. There were twelve tribes of Israel. There would be twelve apostles of the New Israel.

I want to focus in on the gathering of the fragments. Unlike the manna, the fragments were not to be thrown away. They came from God. This happens in our churches every time we celebrate Mass. Bread and wine are consecrated, not blessed, but consecrated. They become the Eucharist, the Body and the Blood of the Lord. Once the physical elements are transformed, they remain the Body and Blood of the Lord. We place the consecrated hosts in our tabernacles because this is still the Lord. We bring the Body of Christ to those who cannot join us at Mass. We pray before the Body of Christ in our tabernacles. The Eucharist is not merely a liturgical action during the Mass. It is Jesus. He is really present in the consecrated species, the bread and wine.

Define transubstantiation

There are times that people will leave the Catholic Church for another non- Catholic denomination. If I am approached about this, I always tell them that they may have their reasons for leaving the Church, but they are leaving the Eucharist. At least as we understand the Eucharist as the Real Presence of the Lord. Many times these people will say, “No, they have communion services in this or that denomination.” Yes, but that is not the real presence of the Body of Christ. These denominations celebrate a symbolic action of unity with each other and with the Lord, but they do not believe that the bread and wine themselves become the Body and Blood of the Lord. That is why they do not have tabernacles. There is no reason for them to save that which they only recognize as bread after the service. Once there was in Philadelphia a Protestant revival that included communion. After the service was over a photojournalist got a picture of them pouring wine down the sewer. After all it wasn't Jesus. We respect their faith, but we also recognize that what we believe is different than what they believe. We believe that this is really and truly the Body and Blood of Christ. To leave the Catholic Church for another faith is to reject the gift of the real presence of Jesus Christ as Eucharist. Once a person is brought into the mystery of the Eucharist, that person cannot leave this mystery. It would a rejection of a great Grace given when that person became Catholic or entered that stage of life when he or she could come to an understanding of the what we Catholic believe about the Eucharist.

How great is our God? God is so great that he has found a way for all of us to attend the eternal Passover. How great is our God? God is so great that he leads us into his presence and feeds us his meal. How great is our God? He is so great that he has found a way for each of us to join the disciples at the Last Supper, or what is really the First Supper, the First Supper of the Kingdom.

How great is our God? He is so great that He has created billions and billions of people in the world, and, yet, has found a way to treat each person as an only child. How great is our God? He is so great that He loves every person as though each of us were the only person He ever created.

When we receive communion, we are present at the Last Supper, the First Supper, the Banquet of the Lord. When we receive communion we enter into the intimate union with God that Jesus came to earth to provide.

How much our God cares for us! He has found a way to nourish our spiritual lives. His very Body and Blood keeps us strong. He gives us the strength to proclaim his Kingdom.

We need to ask ourselves at communion time: "What am I doing?" Am I just following the crowd? Hopefully not. Am I receiving some sort of blessing? Hopefully, we realize that communion is much more than a blessing. What is it that I am doing when I receive communion? I am receiving the Food that God provides. I am being nourished with the Body and Blood of Christ.

Today we pray for a deeper appreciation and a deeper reverence for the Great Gift of Love that is the Eucharist.

2 Desiano

**“What, we’re having leftovers?”**

**Leftovers have a pretty poor reputation.  We like variety when we eat.  Many college dining rooms are set up so students can have different kinds of food if they go to different counters.  Of course, we have the major exception to this: How often did we hear that Italian food tastes better the second day?  But most of us want something new to eat each day.**

**Yet “leftovers” is the theme of both our first reading and the Gospel.  In the first reading, someone brings the prophet Elisha barley loaves and grain fresh from the harvest.  “Give the twenty loaves to the people to eat,” he says.  “There won’t be enough,” his assistant replies.  But not only is it enough; it’s enough to permit leftovers.**

**Many people think that Elijah and Elisha, prophets in ancient Israel who lived 800 years before Jesus, were models for his ministry.  Just as wonders accompanied their deeds, so wonders abounded in the ministry of Jesus.  In the Gospel we have today from Chapter 6 of John’s Gospel, a chapter we will be reading for the next four weeks, Jesus has the opportunity to show God’s abundance the same way as Elisha.  As with Elisha, there is such an abundance that there were twelve wicker baskets full of leftovers.**

**The image of leftovers wants to call our attention to an important truth in our lives as humans and believers.  It is teaching us that what God gives to us contains a richness that can never be exhausted.  This is true is our ordinary human experience: just look at the abundance of love we experience with family and close friends!  And this is true in our spiritual lives: the love God gives to us is inexhaustible.**

**When we Catholics look at the inexhaustibility of this love, the Gospel has two references for us.  First, Jesus is teaching the people, and they cannot get enough of what he is teaching them.  The truth of what Jesus reveals to us about God cannot be exhausted.  It’s not doctrines like we had in the catechism that so many of us memorized.  It’s life-changing insights about that infinite love which is the nature of God.  Secondly, we think about the Eucharist, the heart of our Catholic worship.  For the food that Jesus gives is himself, a gift that can never be exhausted.  Tens of thousands of Catholics celebrated the gift of the Eucharist a few weeks ago in Indianapolis at the Eucharistic Congress.  But we celebrate this love at every Mass.**

**So we have leftovers.  What are we supposed to do with them?  Clearly, we are to continue being fed by them, but we are challenged to share the abundance of God’s gifts to us with others.  How dare we Catholics eat what we eat week by week and think that Jesus is only for us, a treasure to be preserved?  How dare we eat what we eat week by week and forget those who hunger physically and spiritually in our midst?**

**God feeds us.  And God wants us to feed other by our generous love and by the Gospel that we each strive to live.**