

# Spiritual Commentary on the Gospel Readings of the Days of the Great Lent by Father Louka Sidarous (11)

Wednesday of the Second Week of Holy Lent

The Gospel according to St. Matthew (15:32-38)

32 Now Jesus called His disciples to Himself and said, "I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now continued with Me three days and have nothing to eat. And I do not want to send them away hungry, lest they faint on the way."

33 Then His disciples said to Him, "Where could we get enough bread in the wilderness to fill such a great multitude?"

34 Jesus said to them, "How many loaves do you have?"

And they said, "Seven, and a few little fish."

35 So He commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground. 36 And He took the seven loaves and the fish and gave thanks, broke them and gave them to His disciples; and the disciples gave to the multitude. 37 So they all ate and were filled, and they took up seven large baskets full of the fragments that were left. 38 Now those who ate were four thousand men, besides women and children.

Today's gospel is the gospel of being filled and satisfied in the wilderness. To begin, the Lord had compassion on those who walked with Him for three days and said: "I do not want to send them away hungry, lest they faint on the way". In these days of fasting, I contemplate on this gospel, focusing my mind and unifying my heart and feelings towards Him who had compassion and tenderness. I completely trust in what he said and did. My heart pours out with plenty of gratitude, then, I realize the blessing of walking and fasting with Him.

The multitude that walked with You, my Master, forgot the nourishment of the flesh when You satisfied them with the words of eternal life. Your words are spirit and life. You satisfied their spirit before you satisfy the flesh. Only You can do so. Did you not care for the people who walked with you in the olden days. You took them out of the land of Egypt with the might of your arm and cared for them providing them with the manna coming down from heaven and the water that sprung out of the rock!!

Here I am Lord. I come to you to fulfill all my needs. My spirit is indeed hungry as it was said by Amos the prophet "Behold, the days are coming," says the Lord God, "That I will send a famine on the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord." (Amos 8:11). Yes, Lord, my soul thirsts for You, therefore, early in the day, I will seek You in prayers and You satisfy my soul when I am in a desolate place.

The real measure and test of fasting is not in the ability of the flesh to tolerate hunger and thirst. Rather, it is in the ability of the spirit to realize the life of inner fulfillment and savor the spiritual fatness (richness) as it is said in the book of Deuteronomy 32:14 that you fed them the choicest wheat and blood of the grapes which is your holy body and precious blood given for eternal life.

The disciples asked: "Where could we get enough bread in the wilderness to fill such a great multitude?" How is it that they did not understand when You are in their midst? Indeed, the Spirit witnessed: "For they had not understood about the loaves, because their heart was hardened." (Mark 6:52).

Master, I approach You with boldness and ask of You to give your servant a genuine realization of your perpetual presence before me, with me and in me. Then, I shall not ask: from where? Or how? With you there is no wondering or anything impossible. For You are You and nothing is impossible with You. You are the God of miracles. If I truly live according to the true faith, then everything is possible for the one who believes. This is Your promise. You have told Ezekiel in a vision: eat what you find, when You offered him Your written words "Son of man, feed your belly, and fill your stomach with this scroll that I give you." (Eze 3:3). He ate what did not appear to be food and he tasted the sweetness of the word like honey as well as its wonderful and bitter effect internally.

My master "In Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore." Your words were found to be sweet, and I ate them (Jeremiah 15:16). Make me hunger for You. Make me hunger to be filled with Your words and find pleasure in this world "I rejoice at Your word as one who finds great treasure." (plenty of riches) Psalm 119:162.

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