



# Loaves and Fishes: Hospitality at the Table

## A Meal Ritual

### Table Center

Basket of bread (real) and some cardboard cutouts, colored pictures, plastic replicas of fish

### Preparation

Serve fish and bread, for example, tuna casserole with fresh rolls, fish sticks and rolls, a favorite fish dish with rolls.

### ✚ We Gather...

*Invite those gathered to share of a time when they attended a meal that produced lots of leftovers. Everyone who had gathered at the meal had eaten until they were satisfied yet there still seemed to be a lot of food left over. Perhaps it was a potluck meal, or perhaps it was a meal in celebration of a special event: Thanksgiving, Christmas, etc.*

### ✚ We Tell the Story...

*Invite someone to proclaim the Gospel reading...*

Jesus crossed Lake Galilee, which was also known as Lake Tiberias. A large crowd had seen him work miracles to heal the sick, and those people went with him. It was almost time for the Jewish festival of Passover, and Jesus went up on a mountain with his disciples and sat down.

When Jesus saw the large crowd coming toward him, he asked Philip, "Where will we get enough food to feed all these people?" He said this to test Philip, since he already knew what he was going to do.

Philip answered, "Don't you know that it would take almost a year's wages just to buy only a little bread for each of these people?"

Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, was one of the disciples. He spoke up and said, "There is a boy here who has five small loaves of barley bread and two fish. But what good is that with all these people?"

The ground was covered with grass, and Jesus told his disciples to have everyone sit down. About five thousand men were in the crowd. Jesus took the bread in his hands and gave thanks to God. Then he passed the bread to the people, and he did the same with the fish, until everyone had plenty to eat.

The people ate all they wanted, and Jesus told his disciples to gather up the leftovers, so that nothing would be wasted. The disciples gathered them up and filled twelve large baskets with what was left over from the five barley loaves.

After the people had seen Jesus work this miracle, they began saying, "This must be the Prophet who is to come into the world!"

Jesus realized that they would try to force him to be their king. So he went up on a mountain, where he could be alone.  
(John 6:1-15)

## ✚ We Share a Meal...

*Place the meal on the table*

*Pray together...*

Gracious God, you continue to bless us with so much. We thank you for the companions gathered at this table – may we be as nourished through sharing time together as we are in sharing food together. Bless the food that sits before us—may it feed our bodies and nurture us to give what we have to those who have less. Amen.

*As the meal is being shared, invite those gathered at the table to discuss...*

- When you are gathered at the table for a meal, what is most important to you—the food being served or the people gathered to eat it?
  - Can you recall a time when unexpected company showed up and you thought you did not have enough food to feed them but you ended up having extra food when the meal was done? Share your initial reactions to the unexpected company and to the supply of food remaining
- OR
- Do you remember a time when you were having a snack and some friends showed up who were also hungry? Did you share your snack? How did you feel? Was it initially hard to be hospitable? Were you tempted to tell them that you did not have enough food to feed them?

## ✚ We Go Forth...

*Conclude by saying...*

Part of the challenge of Jesus' feeding of the five thousand for us is his hospitality. He had gone to the hills to share some time with his disciples and perhaps for some quiet time for himself. The crowds followed, and though the disciples thought it would be best to let the crowds get their own food, Jesus opted to sacrifice his time and space to feed the crowd. The endless supply of food is a prelude to the eternal food we receive through Eucharist: the body and blood of Jesus. As we leave our meal, I invite you to reflect on how you practice the virtue of hospitality: how are you hospitable or welcoming to others? How are you able to put the needs of others before your own?

*We pray...*

Gracious God, source of all life and goodness, you sent your son Jesus to show us the way to love. Help us to be as hospitable as he was, to open our hearts and homes to those in need. Amen.

