

For a piece of bread (8th Sunday of Matthew) (Metropolitan Meletios of Nikopolis)

[Ξένες γλώσσες / In English](#)



We hear in today's Gospel narrative that Christ was in an out-of-the-way place where thousands of people had been listening to His words all day, ignoring their needs and the work in their homes. In the end the holy apostles intervened and told Him: 'Let them go. They can go into the nearby villages and get something to eat. They've had nothing all day'. Christ replied: 'You give them something'. 'We haven't got enough. Only five loaves and two fish. That's never going to be enough for five thousand men and goodness knows how many women'.



Certainly, by human standards it wasn't enough. But in God's terms everything's possible, so there was more than enough in the end.

It's important to note, however, that Christ multiplied bread, because bread's the staff of life.

It starts from a grain of wheat. But first you have to 'sacrifice' it and 'cast' it into the earth. In the earth, the seed seems to 'rot'. It appears to cease to exist. But from this non-existence, a beautiful plant emerges.

How wise God is! A seed becomes a beautiful plant. And suddenly you find on it twenty, thirty or more grains of wheat, which, when you grind them, become flour.

If you knead the flour and bake it, you get bread. How wonderful and tasty it is, if it's from good wheat. What a miracle of God's wisdom.

And something else. Doctors tell us that bread is the basis of our diet. These days doctors and hygienists have driven us crazy with all the nutrients our organism needs. Bread has the most important ones. This is why it's our basic nourishment.

This is how God arranged it. He knows what He's doing. And He knew what Christ was doing when He multiplied the bread for people. He wanted to show us that we should turn our attention and seek the 'essence'. Not foods which simply tickle our fancy, but the food which strengthens our heart. Food that satisfies, supports and strengthens. Food which (and here the dietologists agree), the more simple it is, the more human it is.

This is why we, as rational beings, need to separate superficial delight from real benefit. We should want to eat what's beneficial. And we should know that what's beneficial isn't so only for us personally, but for everybody else as well.

This is why Christ multiplied the bread that the apostles had for Himself and themselves, and thus arranged for everybody to eat their fill.

We need to think deeply about the word of God. We have to exercise our grey matter a bit to understand the message properly. Its depth. Our head and our life acquire so much wisdom if we study the word of God.

When the people were eating, Christ said: 'There's another "bread". What you're eating will go to your stomach. It'll satisfy you for a while. A short time. For a day. It gives passing strength, health and robustness to people. But there's also another "bread" and this doesn't come out of the earth, it descends from heaven. And this bread of heaven is a thousand times more valuable than that which comes out of the earth. How much more precious? As much as the highest heaven is above the earth. And the food which descends from heaven is my body and blood'.

Christ, the Son of God, came down from heaven to earth. And He took from the holy 'earth' of our most holy Lady, the Mother of God, the first cell of His Body. Gradually, the whole of His human nature was formed. And just as a shoot gives off a sweet scent, is beautiful and is beneficial in terms of the food it provides, so, from the shoot of the flesh of Christ, the aroma of virtue and the power of His teaching and example spread out into the world. But this wasn't all Christ did.

In the end, He ground Himself, like wheat, and made Himself bread, for us and for the salvation of the world. And on Great Thursday, just before His death, He gave

this bread of heaven to His disciples, and through them to all His disciples over the centuries, saying: 'Take, eat. This is my body which is broken for you, for the remission of sins and for eternal life'.

This is the bread of the God Who came down from heaven. Whoever eats it (Him) isn't strengthened only for a little while, but receives purification of the soul, eternal life and resurrection. Christ says: 'Whoever eats my body and drinks my blood will be raised on the day of the Second Coming to enjoy the Kingdom of God eternally', in a place where they'll never hunger again.

But for the grain to become bread it has to be ground, kneaded and baked, so that it'll be edible and tasty, and in the same way Christ, the Son of God, came down and was 'ground'. How was He ground? Through so many trials and, eventually the Cross. And His Body became our life.

And we, says Saint Ignatius the God-bearer, should be ready for sacrifices and for being 'ground up'. Even as regards our own life. What did he say? 'I am the wheat of God and will be ground by the teeth of wild beasts [a reference to the manner in which he was martyred]. And I hope, in this way, to become "bread" that is well-pleasing to Christ'.

And we, also, should say: 'We're wheat. How can we become bread that's pleasing to Christ?' There's no need to get eaten by wild beasts. All we have to do is not allow the passions of the body and every wickedness of the soul to lead us astray. All our selfishness. We must be willing to have our egotism ground up, to cultivate Christ's love, His goodness and His peace. This will produce the 'flour' which will make us 'tasty bread', worthy to be placed on the altar of the Kingdom of God, before the throne of Christ.