

“They filled twelve wicker baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves.” Some 740 years before Jesus’ miracle ten of the twelve tribes of Israel, all 10 being in the northern region, were deported and taken out of the promised land. If that wasn’t enough, the Assyrians brought in 5 foreign nations to occupy the northern kingdom to intermarry with those who stayed behind so as to ‘breed out’ the ten tribes of Israel, so that there would no longer be a true-blooded descendent of Jacob, Isaac, and Abraham. The five nations as it were fragmented the 10 tribes among the gentiles, much like sin does within our own lives and in our communities. And As time went on God sent prophets who said that on the Day of the Lord, the lost tribes would be brought back and Israel would be reunited, the divided kingdom would be made whole; that the gentiles nations would convert and come to Jerusalem and worship the True God.

“They filled twelve wicker baskets with fragments from the five barely loaves.” Whenever we see the number 12 we should think of the tribes of Israel and the Apostles. The 12 baskets symbolize the reconstituted Israel, the Church. In the old testament God often refers to the people Israel as ‘my chosen people, in Hebrew- my *Qahal*, the Greek word for this is *Ecclesia*, from which we get the word: church. Jesus sends the disciples to gather the fragments of the 5 into the 12. See the symbolism that is being alluded to within this real miracle of the loaves: the disciples gather the fragmentation of the 5 nations into the new Israel that has the 12 Apostles as a foundation. We see this ‘gathering in’ today with RCIA candidates, and baptisms, and reversions. This is what the prophets prophesied. And What sustains this coming together, this unity that obtains in the New Israel which is the mystical body of Christ but the Eucharist. The Eucharist is the means by which we attain unity and growth in the Spirit. The Eucharist is the continuation of the Incarnation.

“Have the people recline. Now there was a great deal of grass in that place, so the men reclined.” It’s interesting to note that the people had to recline before eating, they had to be obedient to Jesus who instructed them through His disciples. Why? Go to the famous Psalm 23: ‘The Lord is my Shepherd...He makes me to recline in green pastures...’, Jesus is showing that He is the Shepherd of that Psalm, but also that those who hear his voice and listen to Him are His sheep, and it is His sheep that He feeds. But to be His sheep and follow is to turn from something so as to turn toward Him. St. Paul tells us what it means to obey Jesus: “live in a manner worthy of the call you have received”, a call to Heaven (by virtue of our Baptism)- something we receive and do not take; given not earned. “(We) **must**”, Paul continues, “**live with all humility, and gentleness, with Patience, bearing with one another through love.**” Eating the bread which the Son of God gives- which is His flesh and His blood- effects intimate communion with the Blessed Trinity, and from that communion, there is unity and communion with each other and the Saints in Heaven. Receiving Holy Communion is not solely a private affair. Yes, the communion we have with God is primary and must be, but this communion we have with God in the Eucharist serves as a foundation for the communion with our neighbors in the Church. Jesus gives and brings about peace, order, and unity from chaos, disorder, and fragmentation that is the effects of sin- Both in our community and personal lives:

but He can do so only in the measure that we dispose ourselves to receive. What do we bring to receive?