**THE EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST**

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Today's Gospel from relates to us the feeding of the five thousand and the miraculous multiplication of loaves and fishes.

First of all, we should note that this was an enormous crowd, almost unimaginable in size, of five thousand men plus women and children. We notice how they followed Christ on foot in the heat of the day into the wilderness and without food. What faith and devotion we see here, when there are Orthodox who claim to be unable to come to church on Sundays in their cars, because the church is too far from their beds!

Secondly, we can see that this miracle took place not for the personal vanity or glory of the Saviour, but out of compassion for the people. We can see this in many miracles of Christ and it is mentioned again in today's Gospel how the Lord healed because He 'took pity' on the sick. Each miracle of Christ is an act of love performed out of compassion.

Thirdly, we see also how before He performed the miracle, Our Lord took up the five loaves and fishes, and then looked up to Heaven and thanked the Father and blessed the food. Here He sets us Orthodox the example of praying before eating. How many Orthodox often forget even to make the sign of the cross before eating! And yet the Saviour Himself, 'by Whom all things were made', asks for the blessing of the Father before eating.

Fourthly, we can see how this miracle is also a revelation of the Saviour's divinity, of the power of Christ.

Finally, in this miracle we see how Christ not only feeds us with material food, but also with spiritual food, for, as it is written in the Holy Scriptures, man shall not live by bread alone. We see this in the numbers mentioned in this Gospel.

Why five loaves? The number five, as we read in the Psalms and in the prayers of thanksgiving after communion, represent our five senses, being, which is fed by Christ, the Bread of Life.

Why two fishes? They represent the two parts of the New Testament, the Gospels and the Epistles, which were written by fishermen become fishers of men, for we are spiritually fed by their writings.

Why twelve baskets of fragments? They represent the twelve Apostles who preach to the ends of the universe, the fragments who feed our souls with the words of Christ through the Holy Spirit.

 Today the Church calls us to see that life is wonderful. The Holy Fathers say that in the miracle of multiplying bread is shown the same God’s power which every year multiplies seeds sown to the earth and as in the first days of creation orders the earth to bring forth its fruit. So, handful of seeds thrown to the earth, will return to you by sheaves.

This is God’s miracle, and this is our participation in the Lord’s miracle. An image of Church is given to us in today’s Gospel. Here, the Head of the Church is Christ, Its Creator, here are the Apostles, shepherds installed by Christ, here are the people. And here it is important to stress the words of the Holy Scripture: saying to the Apostles, “you give them something to eat”, Jesus, taking the loaves, “gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds”, they have been feeding spiritually the whole world, have been feeding everybody looking for God and His Truth by those gifts which Christ had given the Church: by God’s word, holy sacraments, a prayer for all mankind. Let the Great Shepherd Christ help each of us to belong not only physically to His Body – His Church, but let our soul live in it. Amen.

Amen.