

John: 6:5–14

From Catena Aurea:

1. After these things Jesus went over the sea of Galilee, which is the sea of Tiberias.
2. And a great multitude followed him, because they saw his miracles which he did on them that were diseased.
3. And Jesus went up into a mountain, and there he sat with his disciples.
4. And the Passover, a feast of the Jews, was nigh.
5. When Jesus then lifted up his eyes, and saw a great company come unto him, he saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?
6. And this he said to prove him: for he himself knew what he would do.
7. Philip answered him, Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little.
8. One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, saith unto him,
9. There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes: but what are they among so many?
10. And Jesus said, Make the men sit down. Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand.
11. And Jesus took the loaves; and when he had given thanks, he distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down; and likewise of the fishes as much as they would.
12. When they were filled, he said unto his disciples, Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost.
13. Therefore they gathered them together, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves, which remained over and above unto them that had eaten.

14. Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that Prophet that should come into the world.

CHRYSOSTOM. (Hom. xlii. 1) As missiles rebound with great force from a hard body, and fly off in all directions, whereas a softer material retains and stops them; so violent men are only excited to greater rage by violence on the side of their opponents, whereas gentleness softens them. Christ quieted the irritation of the Jews by retiring from Jerusalem. He went into Galilee, but not to Cana again, but beyond the sea: After these things Jesus went over the sea of Galilee, which is the sea of Tiberias.

THEOPHYLACT. He goes from place to place to try the dispositions of people, and excite a desire to hear Him: And a great multitude followed Him, because they saw His miracles which He did on them that were diseased.

CHRYSOSTOM. (Hom. xlii. 1) Though favoured with such teaching, they were influenced less by it, than by the miracles; a sign of their low state of belief: for Paul says of tongues, that they are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not. (1 Cor. 14:22) They were wiser of whom it is said, that they were astonished at His doctrine. (Matt. 7:28) The Evangelist does not say what miracles He wrought, the great object of his book being to give our Lord's discourses. It follows: And Jesus went up into a mountain, and there sat with His disciples. He went up into the mountain, on account of the miracle which was going to be done. That the disciples alone ascended with Him, implies that the people who stayed behind were in fault for not following. He went up to the mountain too, as a lesson to us to retire from the tumult and confusion of the world, and leave wisdom in solitude. And the passover, a feast of the Jews, was nigh. Observe, in a whole year, the Evangelist has told us of no miracles of Christ, except His healing the impotent man, and the nobleman's son. His object was to give not a regular history, but only a few of the principal acts of our Lord. But why did not our Lord go up to the feast? He was taking occasion, from the wickedness of the Jews, gradually to abolish the Law.

THEOPHYLACT. The persecutions of the Jews gave Him reason for retiring, and thus setting aside the Law. The truth being now revealed, types were at an end, and He was under no obligation to keep the Jewish feasts. Observe the expression, a feast of the Jews, (Mat. 14:13) not a feast of Christ.

CHRYSOSTOM. (Hom. xlii. 1) Nor did He only sit with His disciples, but conversed with them familiarly, and gained possession of their minds. Then He looked, and saw a crowd advancing. But why did He ask Philip that question? Because He knew that His disciples, and he especially, needed further teaching. For this Philip it was who said afterwards, Shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us. (c. 14:8) And if the miracle

had been performed at once, without any introduction, the greatness of it would not have been seen. The disciples were made to confess their own inability, that they might see the miracle more clearly; And this He said to prove him.

AUGUSTINE. (de verb. Dom. Serm. 17) One kind of temptation leads to sin, with which God never tempts any one; (James 1:13.) and there is another kind by which faith is tried. (Deut. 13:3.) In this sense it is said that Christ proved His disciple. This is not meant to imply that He did not know what Philip would say; but is an accommodation to men's way of speaking. For as the expression, Who searcheth the hearts of men, does not mean the searching of ignorance, but of absolute knowledge; so here, when it is said that our Lord proved Philip, we must understand that He knew him perfectly, but that He tried him, in order to confirm his faith. The Evangelist himself guards against the mistake which this imperfect mode of speaking might occasion, by adding, For He Himself knew what He would do.

THEOPHYLACT. Or to shew others it. He was not ignorant of His disciple's heart Himself.

AUGUSTINE. (de Con. Evang. l. ii. c. xlvi) But if our Lord, according to John's account, on seeing the multitude, asked Philip, tempting him, whence they could buy food for them, it is difficult at first to see how it can be true, according to the other account, that the disciples first told our Lord, to send away the multitude; and that our Lord replied, They need not depart; give ye them to eat. (Matt. 25:16) We must understand then it was after saying this, that our Lord saw the multitude, and said to Philip what John had related, which has been omitted by the rest.

CHRYSOSTOM. (Hom. xlii. s. 1) Or they are two different occasions altogether.

THEOPHYLACT. Thus tried by our Lord, Philip was found to be possessed with human notions, as appears from what follows, Philip answered Him, Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little.

AUGUSTINE. (de Con. Evan. l. ii. c. xlvi) The reply, which is attributed to Philip by John, Mark puts in the mouth of all the disciples, either meaning us to understand that Philip spoke for the rest, or else putting the plural number for the singular, which is often done.

THEOPHYLACT. Andrew is in the same perplexity that Philip is; only he has rather higher notions of our Lord: There is a lad here which hath five burley loaves and two small fishes.

CHRYSOSTOM. (Hom. xlii. 2.) Probably He had some reason in his mind for this speech. He would know of Elijah's miracle, by which a hundred men were fed with twenty loaves. This was a great step; but here he stopped. He did not rise any higher. For his next words are, But what are these among so many? He thought that less could produce less in a miracle, and more more; a great mistake; inasmuch as it was as easy for Christ to feed the multitude from a few fishes as from many. He did not really want any material to work from, but only made use of created things for this purpose in order to shew that no part of the creation was severed from His wisdom.

THEOPHYLACT. This passage confounds the Manicheans, who say that bread and all such things were created by an evil Deity. The Son of the good God, Jesus Christ, multiplied the loaves. Therefore they could not have been naturally evil; a good God would never have multiplied what was evil.

AUGUSTINE. (de Con. Evang. ii. c. xlvi) Andrew's suggestion about the five loaves and two fishes, is given as coming from the disciples in general, in the other Evangelists, and the plural number is used.

CHRYSOSTOM. (Hom. xlii. 2.) And let those of us, who are given to pleasure, observe the plain and abstemious eating of those great and wonderful men. He made the men sit down before the loaves appeared, to teach us that with Him, things that are not are as things that are; as Paul says, Who calleth those things that be not, as though they were. (Rom. 4:17.) The passage proceeds then: And Jesus said, Make the men sit down.

THEOPHYLACT. i. e. green grass. It was the time of the Passover, which was kept the first month of the spring. So the men sat down in number about five thousand. The Evangelist only counts the men, following the direction in the law. Moses numbered the people from twenty years old and upwards, making no mention of the women; to signify that the manly and juvenile character is especially honourable in God's eyes. And Jesus took the loaves; and when He had given thanks, He distributedc to them that were sat down: and likewise of the fishes as much as they would.

CHRYSOSTOM. (Hom. xlii. 2.) But why when He is going to heal the impotent, to raise the dead, to calm the sea, does He not pray, but here does give thanks? To teach us to give thanks to God, whenever we sit down to eat. And He prays more in lesser matters, in order to shew that He does not pray from any motive of need. For had prayer been really necessary to supply His wants, His praying would have been in proportion to the importance of each particular work. But acting, as He does, on His own authority, it is evident, He only prays out of condescension to us. And, as a great multitude was collected, it was an

opportunity of impressing on them, that His coming was in accordance with God's will. Accordingly, when a miracle was private, He did not pray; when numbers were present, He did.

HILARY. (iii. de Trin. c. 18) Five loaves are then set before the multitude, and broken. The broken portions pass through into the hands of those who break, that from which they are broken all the time not at all diminishing. And yet there they are, the bits taken from it, in the hands of the persons breaking. There is no catching by eye or touch the miraculous operation: that is, which was not, that is seen, which is not understood. It only remains for us to believe that God can do all things.

AUGUSTINE. (Tr. xxiv. s. 1.) He multiplied in His hands the five loaves, just as He produces harvest out of a few grains. There was a power in the hands of Christ; and those five loaves were, as it were, seeds, not indeed committed to the earth, but multiplied by Him who made the earth.

CHRYSOSTOM. (Hom. xlii. 3) Observe the difference between the servant and the lord. The Prophets received grace, as it were, by measure, and according to that measure performed their miracles: whereas Christ, working this by His own absolute power, produces a kind of superabundant result. When they were filled, He said unto His disciples, Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost. Therefore they gathered them together, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments. This was not done for needless ostentation, but to prevent men from thinking the whole a delusion; which was the reason why He made use of an existing material to work from. But why did He give the fragments to His disciples to carry away, and not to the multitude? Because the disciples were to be the teachers of the world, and therefore it was most important that the truth should be impressed upon them. Wherefore I admire not only the multitude of the loaves which were made, but the definite quantity of the fragments; neither more nor less than twelve baskets full, and corresponding to the number of the twelve Apostles.

THEOPHYLACT. We learn too from this miracle, not to be pusillanimous in the greatest straits of poverty.

AUGUSTINE. (Tr. xxiv. s. 7) Christ is a Prophet, and the Lord of Prophets; as He is an Angel, and the Lord of Angels. In that He came to announce something, He was an Angel; in that He foretold the future, He was a Prophet; in that He was the Word made flesh, He was Lord both of Angels and Prophets; for none can be a Prophet without the word of God.

CHRYSOSTOM. Their expression, that should come into the world, shews that they expected the arrival of some great Prophet. And this is why they say, This is of a truth that Prophet: the article being put in the Greek, to shew that He was distinct from other Prophets.

AUGUSTINE. (Tr. xxiv. s. 1, 2) But let us reflect a little here. Forasmuch as the Divine Substance is not visible to the eye, and the miracles of the divine government of the world, and ordering of the whole creation, are overlooked in consequence of their constancy; God has reserved to Himself acts, beside the established course and order of nature, to do at suitable times; in order that those who overlooked the daily course of nature, might be roused to wonder by the sight of what was different from, though not at all greater, than what they were used to. The government of the world is a greater miracle, than the satisfying the hunger of five thousand with five loaves; and yet no one wonders at this: the former excited wonder; not from any real superiority in it, but because it was uncommon. But it would be wrong to gather no more than this from Christ's miracles: for, the Lord who is on the mount, and the Word of God which is on high, the same is no humble person to be lightly passed over, but we must look up to Him reverently.

AUGUSTINE. (lib. lxxxiii. Quæst. q. 61. in princ.) The five barley loaves signify the old law; either because the law was given to men not as yet spiritual, but carnal, i. e. under the dominion of the five senses, (the multitude itself consisted of five thousand:) or because the Law itself was given by Moses in five books. And the loaves being of barley is also an allusion to the Law, which concealed the soul's vital nourishment, under carnal ceremonies. For in barley the corn itself is buried under the most tenacious husk. Or, it alludes to the people who were not yet freed from the husk of carnal appetite, which cling to their heart.

AUGUSTINE. (lib. lxxxiv. Quæst. qu. 61) The two fishes again, that gave the pleasant taste to the bread, seem to signify the two authorities by which the people were governed, the Royal, viz. and the Priestly; both of which prefigure our Lord, who sustained both characters.

AUGUSTINE. (Tr. xxiv. 5) The boy who had these is perhaps the Jewish people, who, as it were, carried the loaves and fishes after a servile fashion, and did not eat them. That which they carried, while shut up, was only a burden to them; when opened became their food.

AUGUSTINE. (Tr. xxiv. s. 5) By the act of breaking He multiplied the five loaves. The five books of Moses, when expounded by breaking, i. e. unfolding them, made many books.

AUGUSTINE. (lib. lxxxiii. Quæst. qu. 61) Our Lord by breaking, as it were, what was hard in the Law, and opening what was shut, that time when He opened the Scriptures to the disciples after the resurrection, brought the Law out in its full meaning.

AUGUSTINE. (Tr. xxiv. s. 5) Our Lord's question proved the ignorance of His disciples, i. e. the people's ignorance of the Law. They lay on the grass, i. e. were carnally minded, rested in carnal things, for all flesh is grass. (Isa. 40:6) Men are filled with the loaves, when what they hear with the ear, they fulfil in practice.

AUGUSTINE. (Tr. xxiv. s. 6) And what are the fragments, but the parts which the people could not eat? An intimation, that those deeper truths, which the multitude cannot take in, should be entrusted to those who are capable of receiving them, and afterwards teaching them to others; as were the Apostles. For which reason twelve baskets were filled with them.

From Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture:

6:5 How Are We to Buy Bread?

Discrepancies with John's Account?

Augustine: If our Lord, according to the narrative of John, on seeing the multitude, asked Philip (having in view to test him), where they could buy food for them, it is difficult at first to see how it can be true, according to the other account, that the disciples first told our Lord to send away the multitude. ... There is also the fact that our Lord replied, "They need not depart; you give them something to eat." ... We must understand then it was after saying this that our Lord saw the multitude and said to Philip what John had related, which has been omitted by the rest. Harmony of the Gospels 2.46.96.

Two Different Accounts?

Chrysostom: [Or], the two are entirely different accounts. Homilies on the Gospel of 42.1.

The Greatness of the Miracle.

Chrysostom: Jesus spoke the same way to Moses in the Old Testament, for he did not bring about a sign until he had asked him, "What is that in your hand?" Because things that happen unexpectedly and all at once are liable to throw us into forgetfulness of what happened previously, Jesus first involved Philip in a confession of the present circumstances. In this way, when the astonishment comes upon him, afterwards he might be unable to drive away the memory of what he had confessed, and thus might learn by

comparison the greatness of the miracle, which in fact takes place in this instance. Homilies on the Gospel of John 42.1.

6:6 This He Said to Test Him

Weakness of Faith.

Cyril of Alexandria: Smallness of faith is the worst sickness and surpasses all evil. If God works or promises to do anything, then let it be believed in simple faith. Just because we are powerless to accomplish anything, we should not let God be accused by our inability to understand how he will accomplish things beyond our understanding.... What is then beyond our comprehension is received by faith and not by investigation. Therefore, just as one who believes is admired, so also one who doubts is not free from blame. The Savior himself testifies about this when he says, "He who believes in him is not condemned; he who does not believe is condemned already." Commentary on the Gospel of John 3.4.

6:7–9 Divine Provision in Five Barley Loaves and Two Fish

The Creator of the Universe Will Provide.

Romanus Melodus:

"Master, we can find only five barley loaves;

No one of us brought anything into the desert,

But a child is here who has them.

O Lover of man, no other resource is possible for us.

For an enormous and boundless number of people, O Man of pity,

How can these five loaves be sufficient?

In addition, he has two fishes.

But hurry and nourish them, since Thou art

The heavenly bread of immortality.”

When Christ heard these words of His disciples,

He answered them in this way: “You are mistaken if you do not know

That I am the Creator of the universe; I provide for the world;

I now know clearly what these people need.

I see the desert and that the sun is setting;

Indeed I arranged the setting of the sun;

I understand the distress of the crowd which is here;

I know what I have in mind to do for them.

I myself shall cure their hunger, for I am

The heavenly bread of immortality....

“Even though you consider carefully, can you as mere men secure nourishment,

Or can you, though you are worried, feed the people?

Or, Life’ you cannot feed them, have you the power to keep silent?

I, alone, as Creator take thought for all.

I exist as good, God before the centuries.

And I provide every kind of food for all people;

But you, on beholding the multitude, are worried,

And you do not consider the One who provides abundantly,

As I am set before all, offering

The heavenly bread of immortality.

“I know in advance what you are thinking and what you are saying to each other,

As you see the people, the means of provision, and the hour.

You are reasoning, ‘Who will feed the entire crowd in the desert?’

Well, know clearly, friends, who I am.

I fed Israel in the desert;

I gave them bread from Heaven;

In a region without water, I made water to flow from a rock; ...

Since I am

The heavenly bread of immortality.

Kontakion on the Multiplication of Loaves 13.12–17.

The Significance of Five Loaves and Two Fish.

Cyril of Alexandria: The five barley loaves signify the five books of Moses, that is, the whole law which gives as it were a coarser type of food.... But the fish signify good food attained through the fishermen, that is, the more delicate books of Christ’s disciples. Within the latter, there are two distinct types, the preaching of the apostles and the proclamation of the evangelists, which shine forth among us. Commentary on the Gospel of John 3.4.

The Husk of the Pentateuch Fulfilled in Christ the Kernel.

Augustine: To provide a brief explanation: the five loaves are understood as the five books of Moses; rightly they are not wheat but barley because they belong to the Old Testament. For you know that barley was created in such a way that one can scarcely get to its kernel. For this kernel is clothed with a covering

of husk, and this husk is tenacious and adhering, so that it is stripped off with effort. Such is the letter of the Old Testament, clothed with the coverings of carnal mysteries; but if one gets to its kernel, it feeds and satisfies.

And so a boy was carrying five loaves and two fishes. If we should seek to know who this boy was, perhaps he was the people of Israel, carrying the loaves and fish with a childlike understanding and not eating of them itself. For those things that it was carrying, when kept shut, were a burden, but when opened, were food. Moreover, the two fish seem to us to signify those two sublime personages in the Old Testament who were anointed to make holy and rule the people, the priest and king. Tractates on the Gospel of John 24.5.1–2.

6:10 Abundant Grass, Abundant People

Five Thousand Fed in John and Acts.

Hilary of Poitiers: And so, taking the loaves and fishes, the Lord looked up to heaven, then blessed and broke them, giving thanks to the Father that, after the law and the prophets, he has himself become the evangelical bread. And when he had commanded the people to sit down on the grass, not to lie prone on the earth, but to sit upheld by the law, each one spread his own good works, like the grass of the earth, under him. The bread is also given to the apostles, because it is through them the gifts of the divine grace are to be given. Then the people ate of the five loaves and two fishes and were filled. And of the fragments of the bread and of the fishes, after all who had sat down were satisfied, there remained over enough to fill twelve baskets: that is, the hunger of the multitude is satisfied by the word of God coming to them from the teaching of the law and the prophets. And the abundance of the divine goodness, kept in reserve for the people of the Gentiles, has overflowed from the source of eternal food unto the filling of the twelve apostles.

And the number of those who ate is, we find, the same as that of those who were to believe. For, as we learn from the book of the Acts, out of the numbers of the people of Israel five thousand believed. For, the miracle of these things extends even to the measure of the reason that underlies them. The bread together with the fishes broken for the feeding of the people increased to the need of the number of people who believed, and to the number of apostles chosen to be filled with heavenly graces. The quantity conformed to the number, and the number to the quantity. On Matthew 14.11.

6:11 When He Had Given Thanks

Be Fruitful and Multiply.

Romanus Melodus:

Christ had brought to Him the five loaves of bread,

And straightway, lifting His eyes to the Father, He said:

“I am doing Thy deeds; for I am Thy Son;

For in the beginning, I created the whole world

Together with Thee and the Holy Spirit; for I am

The heavenly bread of immortality.”

Behold how the masters, the servants of Christ, were arranged and attended

The Servant, Jesus; and they found Him at once.

For the Lord blessed the five loaves of bread,

Speaking to them as follows in spiritual fashion:

“Grow and multiply perceptibly,

And nourish now all who are assembled here.”

And immediately the loaves obeyed the Lord;

They multiplied invisibly

As Christ spoke to them, for He is

The heavenly bread of immortality.

Kontakion on the Multiplication of Loaves 13.19–20.

Thanksgiving before the Meal.

Chrysostom: But why did he not pray when he was about to restore the paralytic, nor when he was raising the dead, or bridling the sea, while he does so here over the loaves? It was to show that when we begin our meals, we ought to give thanks to God. He does not do this because he needs to, but to show in both lesser and greater things it is fitting. Homilies on the Gospel of John 42.3.

Miracle Not Evident While Happening.

Hilary of Poitiers: Five loaves are then set before the multitude, and broken. While the apostles are dividing them, a succession of newly created portions passes—they cannot tell how—through their hands. The loaf which they are dividing does not grow smaller and yet their hands are continually full of the pieces. The speed of the process baffles the sight. You follow with the eye a hand full of portions, and in the meantime you see that the contents of the other hand are not diminished. And all the while the heap of pieces grows. The carvers are busy at their task, the eaters hard at work at theirs. The hungry are satisfied and the fragments fill twelve baskets. Neither sight nor any of the other senses can discover how such an amazing miracle happened. What did not exist was created; what we see passes our understanding. It only remains for us to believe that God can do all things. On the Trinity 3.6.

Going Beyond the Five Senses.

Clement of Alexandria: So very mystically the five loaves are broken by the Savior, and fill the crowd of the listeners. For great is the crowd that keep to the things of the senses, as if they were the only things in existence. “Cast your eyes round, and see,” says Plato, “that none of the uninitiated listen.” Such are they who think that nothing else exists but what they can hold firmly with their hands; but do not admit as in the department of existence, actions and processes of generation, and the whole of the unseen. For such are those who keep by the five senses. But the knowledge of God is a thing inaccessible to the ears and other organs of the senses with this kind of people. Stromateis 5.6.

The Creator of Grain Multiplies It.

Augustine: He therefore created as God creates. For, just as he multiplies the produce of the fields from a few grains, from that same source of power he multiplied in his hands the five loaves. There was power, indeed, in the hands of Christ. And those five loaves were like seeds, not indeed committed to the earth, but multiplied by him who made the earth. Tractates on the Gospel of John 24.1.

In Breaking, Loaves Are Multiplied.

Augustine: And he who was signified through them [i.e., the loaves] in mystery now came at last. He came now at last who was shown by the kernel of the barley but was hidden by the husk of the barley. He came, himself, one person carrying both personages in himself, priest and king. He is priest through the victim which he offered for us to God—himself. He is king because we are ruled by him. And those things that were being carried concealed [i.e., barley husks] are opened. Thanks be to him. He fulfilled through himself what was promised in the Old Testament. And he ordered the loaves to be broken; by breaking they were multiplied.

Nothing is truer. For those five books of Moses, how many books have they made when they are explained, as if by breaking [them], that is, by discussing [them]? Tractates on the Gospel of John 24.5.3–4.

6:12 Gather the Pieces That Are Left Over

Scattered Bread, Gathered Church.

Didache: Now concerning the Eucharist, give thanks as follows.... concerning the broken bread: “We give you thanks, our Father, for the life and knowledge which you have made known to us through Jesus, your servant; to you be the glory forever. Just as this broken bread was scattered upon the mountain and then was gathered together and became one, so may your church be gathered together from the ends of the earth into your kingdom; for yours is the glory and the power through Jesus Christ forever.” Didache 9.1–4.

God Always Provides More Than We Need.

Ephrem the Syrian: But it was not because he had the ability to multiply it [the loaves of bread and the fish] that he did thus multiply them, but rather because there would then be enough food for those who would eat them. His miracle, therefore, was not in proportion to his own power, but rather in proportion to the hunger of those who were hungry. For if his miracle were to be proportional to his power, there would be no way to measure how much his power overcame. Rather, his miracle was in proportion to the hunger of thousands, and it surpassed the number of the twelve baskets. In the case of all artisans, the desire of those who seek their services is greater than the ability of the artisans, for the artisans are unable to work in line with the desires of those who need them. For God, however, his activity surpasses [the desires of] those who need him. [He said], "Gather up the pieces so that absolutely nothing may be lost," so that it not seem concerning him that he had made use of an apparition; but when a remainder for a day or two was left, they might believe that he had truly acted, and that this was not some vacuous vision. Commentary on Tatian's Diatessaron 12.4.

6:13 They Filled Twelve Baskets

The Gift of Bread That Keeps on Giving.

Origen: In the Psalms it is written of Joseph, "His hands had served in baskets." And the disciples of Jesus, the Twelve, I believe, gathered up twelve baskets of the remainder of the broken bread. These baskets were not half filled but full. And with the disciples of Jesus, as the teachers of the multitudes, now and until the end of the world, remain the twelve baskets of fragments of the living Bread that the multitudes could not eat. Commentary on Matthew 11.2.

Christ Multiplies Our Good Works.

Cyril of Alexandria: Initially the disciples were reluctant to feed the hungry, but seeing this, the Savior gave to them in abundance from the fragments. This teaches us as well, that we, by expending a little for the glory of God, shall receive richer grace according to the saying of Christ, "a good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap." Therefore, we must not be slothful regarding the communion of love toward our brothers and sisters but rather put away from us, as far as possible, the cowardice and fear that lead to inhospitality. Thus we might be confirmed in hope through steadfast

faith in the power of God to multiply even our smallest acts of goodness. Commentary on the Gospel of John 3.4.

6:14 The Prophet Who Is to Come into the World

A Prophet Like Moses.

Ephrem the Syrian: Thus, when they were satisfied, they saw that he had fed them in the wilderness, as Moses [had done] with prayer, and they cried out, saying, “This is the prophet about whom it was said that he is coming into the world.” They were repeating the [prophecy] of Moses that “The Lord will raise up a prophet for you,” not someone ordinary, but rather “like me,” who will fill you with bread in the desert; “like me,” he walked on the sea, and appeared in the cloud. He set his church free from circumcision, and he appointed John, the virgin, in place of Joshua son of Nun. He entrusted Mary, his church, to him, as Moses his flock to Joshua, so that this [prophecy] “like me” would be fulfilled. Commentary on Tatian’s Diatessaron 12.5.

Everyday Miracles No Less Miraculous.

Augustine: The divine substance is not visible to the eye, and the miracles of the divine government of the world and ordering of the whole creation are overlooked because of their constancy.... Because of this, God has reserved for himself acts that are above and beyond the established course and order of nature that he does at suitable times. He does this so that those who overlooked the daily course of nature might be roused to wonder by the sight of what was different from—though not at all greater than—what they were used to. The government of the world is certainly a greater miracle than satisfying the hunger of five thousand with five loaves; and yet no one wonders at this. The miracle excited wonder, not from any real superiority in it but because it was rare.... But it would be wrong to gather no more than this from Christ’s miracles.... Let us understand that the Lord on the mount is the Word on high.... He saw the multitude and knew they were hungry, and so he mercifully fed them not only in virtue of his goodness but also of his power. For what could mere goodness do when there was not even enough bread to feed the hungry crowd? If power had not accompanied goodness, the crowd would have remained fasting and hungry. In short, the disciples, hungry themselves, also wanted to feed the multitudes, but they did not have the wherewithal to feed them. Tractates on the Gospel of John 24.1–3.