

House of Bread

Friends in Christ,

We have spoken this Christmas season about the connection of the Christ-child in the manger with the Lord's presence in the Eucharist, at Mass.

We have also spoken, of the meaning of the word, 'Bethlehem.

It means, House of Bread.

So Jesus comes down from heaven and appears on earth in the 'House of Bread.

The Eucharistic theme is unmistakable.

Now this was also foretold by the ancient prophets. Prophecies of the future Messianic banquet are alluded to in the Old testament, references to the bread and the wine of the Messiah. Jesus calls himself, the Living Bread come down from heaven.

In the ancient temple, priests tended to the sacred bread and wine in the temple which was a prototype of the Eucharist. This bread, kept on the Golden Table, was round and thin.

Isaiah the prophet wrote: You who harvest the grain shall eat it; you who gather the grapes shall drink the wine in my sanctuary (Isaiah 62:1-12)
So the name Bethlehem, 'House of bread, is no coincidence.

Today the Church gives us for the Gospel
the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves.

Mother Church holds before us, the Eucharistic theme:
Jesus is the Bread come down from heaven -
We notice the setting here:
They are seated on green grass, and it says, 'they were
like sheep without shepherd.'
So, the image of the Shepherd.

But does the shepherd feed the people?
Actually, he gives the bread to the apostles,
who will be his shepherds; he says: 'you feed them.'
This is what he says to his apostles, his first priests.
You are my shepherds: you feed them.

So during this time of Epiphany,
Mother Church is showing us a new way that Jesus is
revealed,
in the Breaking of the Bread.

So if we return to Bethlehem, this 'House of Bread,'
what do we really find there?
We find shepherds, kneeling before the Living Bread
come down from heaven.
Shepherds, worshiping.
And these shepherds, are standing around the manger,
where the little Body of Christ lies.

But what is a manger? It is where animals eat, a place for
food.
So, the Nativity, showing us Christ's shepherds,
surrounding the Body of Jesus, in a food trough -
but not food for animals: Divine Food for people.
The Nativity is a little image - of Holy Mass.