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For the Catholic Church, God's Revelation is found in Sacred Tradition, understood as God's Revealed Word handed down by the Living Teaching Authority established by Christ in the Church. That includes both Written Tradition (Scripture) and Unwritten Tradition received from Christ and handed down Orally by the Apostles and their Successors. The Church founded by Christ on Peter, and only that Church, has been Empowered by Christ to 'Interpret' His Teaching Authoritatively in His Name.

Scripture is *Inspired*; *Inspiration* really means that God Himself is the Chief Author of the Scriptures. He uses a Human Agent, in so marvelous a way that the Human writes what the Holy Spirit wants him to write, does so without Error, yet the Human Writer is Free, and keeps his own Style of Language. It is only because God is *Transcendent* that He can do this - insure Freedom from Error, while leaving the Human Free. To say He is Transcendent means that He is above and beyond all our Human Classifications and Categories.

Matthew writes his gospel account to give us the view of Jesus as the King. He records Jesus' authority in calling the disciples: "Follow me" (Matthew 4:19), and he also records more than any of the others about Jesus' teaching concerning God's kingdom and heavenly rule.

Considered one of the most important Catholic theologians and Bible commentators, Cornelius à Lapide's, S.J. writings on the Bible, created a Scripture Commentary so complete and scholarly that it was practically the universal commentary in use by Catholics for over 400 years. Fr. Lapide's most excellent commentaries have been widely known for successfully combining piety and practicality. Written during the time of the Counter Reformation, it includes plenty of apologetics. His vast knowledge is only equaled by his piety and holiness.

## **Matthew 14: 1-36**

Douay Rheims Version

*Herod puts John to death. Christ feeds five thousand in the desert.  
He walks upon the sea, and heals all the diseased with the touch of his garment.*

1. At that time Herod the Tetrarch heard the fame of Jesus.
2. And he said to his servants: This is John the Baptist: he is risen from the dead, and therefore mighty works shew forth themselves in him.
3. For Herod had apprehended John and bound him, and put him into prison, because of Herodias, his brother's wife.
4. For John said to him: It is not lawful for thee to have her.
5. And having a mind to put him to death, he feared the people: because they esteemed him as a prophet.

In this chapter is finished the relation of the Acts of Christ from His second Passover to His third. That is of the second year of His preaching. This may be gathered from John vi. 4, where it is said these things were done about the time of the Passover. This was the third Passover of Christ's preaching. For the First Passover is spoken of in John ii. 13: the second in v. 1.; and the third, as I have just said, in vi. 4.

There remains therefore the third and last year of Christ's preaching, that is to say, His acts from His third, until His fourth and last Passover, when He suffered upon the Cross.

**Verse 36-** No commentary given on this verse.

whilst they carry her about hither and thither—have borne her to the shores of every nation, and she has taken in a cargo of all the foreign merchandise which she has found."

**Verse 34-** *They came to the land of Genesar (Vulg.):* Mark has, *of Gennesaret.* S. Chrysostom and Lyra are of opinion this was the land of the Gergesenes, whose inhabitants wished Christ to depart from them, on account of their swine which He drowned in the lake. But that Gerasa, spoken of in Matthew viii., is a different place from Genesar, the place spoken of here. Gerasa, or Gergesa, was on the eastern side of the sea of Galilee; but Gennesaret was on the western side, in the direction of Capernaum and Bethsaida. For after Christ had fed the five thousand men in the desert of Bethsaida, and they wished to make Him a king, Christ, I say, fleeing from them commanded His disciples to pass over to the hither side of the bay, or the mountain of Bethsaida. This was the land of Gennesaret. In other words, they returned to Bethsaida and Capernaum. Hence Mark says (cap. vi. 45.) "*He constrained His disciples to go into a ship, that they should go before Him across the strait to Bethsaida.*" S. John (cap. vi.), says that the disciples also came to Capernaum, which was a city on the same bank. Thus everything becomes harmonious.

The name Gennesaret signifies, *flourishing valley.* This city was formerly called *Chinneroth*, and from it the whole district derived its name, *Cenerel*, or *Cenneroth.* This by a trifling inflection became *Genesar* and *Gennesaret.* Hence the name of the adjacent Sea of Galilee, or lake of *Genesaret.* The Chaldee turns *Ceneret* into *Genesar.* Listen to Josephus (*lib. 3, de bello. c. 18*). "The country of Genesar extends as far as the lake of the same name. Admirable both for its natural condition and its beauty. In addition to the pleasantness of the climate, it is watered by a most fruitful spring, called by the inhabitants *Capharnaum.*" Adrichomius and S. Jerome fancied Ceneret or Genesaret were the same as the City of Tiberias. But they were mistaken. Besides Tiberias was a considerable distance from Capernaum and Bethsaida. Lastly, Ceneret was in the tribe of Naphtali, as appears from Josh. xix. 35. Tiberias was in the tribe of Zabulon. And Ceneret was near Capernaum.

**Verse 35-** *And when they knew Him, &c.* Instead of *hem of His garment*, the Syriac has *wing*, the Arabic, *extremity of his garment.* The flesh of Christ was so efficacious and health-giving as to communicate its virtue to the garment by which it was covered. From hence S. Chrysostom reasons, that if those who only touched the hem or fringe of Christ's garment were healed, how much more those who touch whole Christ, yea feed upon Him in the Eucharist. What medicine can be more healing than the flesh and Deity of Christ. S. Gregory Nazianzen relates that his sister Gorgonia was healed of a mortal disease by touching the Eucharist. (*Orat. 11*).

Lastly Christ took occasion from this multiplication of the loaves to utter His discourse upon the spiritual and Eucharistic Bread, which S. John gives at length in the sixth chapter of his Gospel.

6. But on Herod's birthday, the daughter of Herodias danced before them: and pleased Herod.
7. Whereupon he promised with an oath, to give her whatsoever she would ask of him.
8. But she being instructed before by her mother, said: Give me here in a dish the head of John the Baptist.
9. And the king was struck sad: yet because of his oath, and for them that sat with him at table, he commanded it to be given.
10. And he sent, and beheaded John in the prison.
11. And his head was brought in a dish: and it was given to the damsel, and she brought it to her mother.
12. And his disciples came and took the body, and buried it, and came and told Jesus.
13. Which when Jesus had heard, he retired from thence by a boat, into a desert place apart, and the multitudes having heard of it, followed him on foot out of the cities.
14. And he coming forth saw a great multitude, and had compassion on them, and healed their sick.
15. And when it was evening, his disciples came to him, saying: This is a desert place, and the hour is now passed: send away the multitudes, that going into the towns, they may buy themselves victuals.
16. But Jesus said to them, They have no need to go: give you them to eat.
17. They answered him: We have not here, but five loaves, and two fishes.
18. Who said to them: Bring them hither to me.
19. And when he had commanded the multitude to sit down upon the grass, he took the five loaves and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed, and brake, and gave the loaves to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitudes.
20. And they did all eat, and were filled. And they took up what remained, twelve full baskets of fragments.
21. And the number of them that did eat, was five thousand men, besides women and children.
22. And forthwith Jesus obliged his disciples to go up into the boat, and to go before him over the water, till he dismissed the people.
23. And having dismissed the multitude, he went into a mountain alone to pray. And when it was evening, he was there alone.
24. But the boat in the midst of the sea was tossed with the waves: for the wind was contrary.
25. And in the fourth watch of the night, he came to them walking upon the sea.
26. And they seeing him walking upon the sea, were troubled, saying: It is an apparition. And they cried out for fear.
27. And immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying: Be of good heart: it is I, fear ye not.
28. And Peter making answer, said: Lord, if it be thou, bid me come to thee upon the waters.

29. And he said: Come. And Peter going down out of the boat walked upon the water to come to Jesus.

30. But seeing the wind strong, he was afraid: and when he began to sink, he cried out, saying: Lord, save me.

31. And immediately Jesus stretching forth his hand took hold of him, and said to him: O thou of little faith, why didst thou doubt?

32. And when they were come up into the boat, the wind ceased.

33. And they that were in the boat came and adored him, saying: Indeed thou art the Son of God.

34. And having passed the water, they came into the country of Genesar.

35. And when the men of that place had knowledge of him, they sent into all that country, and brought to him all that were diseased.

36. And they besought him that they might touch but the hem of his garment. And as many as touched, were made whole.

The first eleven verses of this chapter relate to the decollation of John the Baptist, of which I have spoken at length on the sixth chapter of S. Mark.

**Verse 12-** *His Body:* Syriac, *sclado*, i.e., *a trunk without a head*; because, as Nicephorus says (*l. 1, c. 19*), “Herodias was afraid of John’s reproof even after his head was cut off, and feared its being united to the rest of his body; therefore she took it away with her, and buried it without witnesses in a remote part of the kingdom. Bede and Ruffinus assert the same thing. Observe in this the terrors of a guilty conscience. Herodias was afraid that if the head of John were re-united to his body, he would rise again, and again denounce her incestuous marriage with Herod. Thus, Herod thought John had risen again in Christ. Thus, the Baptist’s head, even when it was cut off, was a source of terror to Herodias.

*Came and told Jesus:* for John, before his death, had commanded his disciples that, when he was dead, they should transfer themselves to Jesus, as indeed some of them had done whilst he was yet alive.

**Verse 13-** *When Jesus heard,* &c. Herod, in the meanwhile, had been occupied with a war against Aretas, king of Arabia, and had not attended to the words and deeds of Jesus. But now that the fame of His many miracles was constantly increasing, he began to turn his attention to them, as Matthew relates in the beginning of this chapter; and was led to suspect that Jesus was John who had risen from the dead. This was why Jesus retired into the desert; 1, and primarily, that He may avoid Herod’s fury, who (as he had beheaded John) would seek to behead him again, in the person of Jesus, especially since it might easily occur to him, or be suggested to him by the Pharisees, that this was the Messiah, the King promised to the Jews, and expected for so many ages. Wherefore, fearing to be deprived of his kingdom, he would have cut Him off, as his father sought to destroy Christ when he cut off the infants at Bethlehem. 2. He retired in order that He might refresh, by a season of quiet, His Apostles, who were now returning from their preaching, and were wearied with their many labours.

and the voice of Christ instilling confidence and security. But the strength of the wind was more obvious, and therefore more powerful than the voice of Christ. Thus its effect was in this instance to cause Peter’s faith to fail; but he rose again after his lapse.

Almost every temptation arises from distrust of God, because a man either trusts to himself, or to human aid, and does not immediately betake himself to God by prayer. Hence then let him who is tempted learn to turn away his mind from the thing which suggests the temptation, and turn it wholly to God, and fix it upon Him, and humbly implore his help. Very beautifully says S. Chrysostom, “Like as a young bird which, before it is able to fly, falls out of its nest upon the ground, whose mother quickly restores it to the nest so also at this time did Christ to Peter.” Therefore let him who is tempted, invoke Christ; so shall he resist the temptation, and overcome it. For if Peter had believed the word of Christ, he would not have doubted, nor have begun to sink.

**Verse 32-** *And when they had gone up,* &c. S. John says (vi. 21) “They wished to receive Him into the ship.” This means, say Jansen and others, that they recognised Christ by His voice, and being certain that it was not a phantom, *they wished*, i.e., they invited Christ to come into the ship; and Christ complied with their invitation. They thought that when Christ was present in the ship, they would sail very rapidly, as they were accustomed to do. And this actually happened, as soon as Christ was in the ship. For as St. John subjoins, *and immediately the ship was at the land*, whither they were going, namely, Bethsaida. This was a new miracle of Christ, that from the middle of the Sea of Galilee, a distance of three miles, they suddenly, and as it were in a moment, arrived at the shore. There were therefore here four miracles of Christ. The first: that He walked upon the waters. The second, that He raised up Peter, when he was afraid, and beginning to sink. The third, that He came into the ship, and stilled the tempest. The fourth, that He immediately brought the ship from the midst of the sea to the shore. Thus, speaking mystically, does Christ by His grace make us to trample upon the loftiness of the world, thus does he make temptations cease, and bring us to the port of eternal bliss.

*Allegorically and tropologically.* S. Augustine: Let us think of the ship as the Church and the faithful soul. The sea is this world. The wind and the waves are persecutions. When the wind arises, the ship is tossed: but because Christ is there, it cannot sink. But in these temptations let the yard-arm be raised, that, suspended to the mast it may make the figure of the cross. To this yard-arm—that is, to the Cross of Christ—let a sincere conversation and a pure confession, like spotless sails, be attached. Let our sails be washed by the waves; let our garments be stretched out, that they may be found without spot or wrinkle. Lastly: after this ship has been built in Jerusalem, and has been sent forth into the midst of this roaring sea, the billows of the tempestuous waves, and the blasts of the raging winds—

*If it be Thou, &c.* Very beautifully does S. Augustine put the following words into Peter's mouth: "If it be Thou, I do not wonder, that Thou dost balance a solid body upon the liquid waves. Why should it be wonderful that the creature should serve its Creator? This I do not wonder at. Do something that I may wonder at. Let Peter walk. Make me to wonder. Bid me come to Thee upon the waves. For how should there not be for me a way on the sea, if Thou shalt give the command, since Thou for us wast made the Way."

**Verse 29-** *Peter came down, &c.* This was done in one of three ways. Either Christ, by His Divine power, kept up Peter, that he should not sink, as the angel kept up Habacuc by the hair of his head, and carried him to Babylon. Or else He did not allow Peter's body to be sufficiently heavy to sink in the waves. Or else He made the waters to be firm and solid beneath Peter's feet, like ice or crystal.

**Verse 30-** *But when he saw the wind, &c.* The strength of the wind caused Peter to fear: fear caused doubt: doubt gave rise to danger. Him whom faith bore upon the waves, doubt caused to sink. The cause was Peter's little faith, as Christ tells him. He was afraid lest Christ should allow him to be drowned by the boisterous wind and the tempestuous waves. He had not as yet received the might of faith and love which he afterwards received from the Holy Ghost at Pentecost.

Christ permitted this, that Peter might recognise his own weakness, and might humble himself, and ask Christ to increase his faith, that he might become the rock of the Faith, according to the words, "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock will I build My Church."

So S. Jerome, Theophylact, and others. "Peter," says S. Chrysostom (*Hom.* 51), "did what was greater, for he magnanimously went down from the ship into the sea. But from the violence of the winds and the waves he was afraid, and failed in that which was less. For it is natural to man sometimes to overcome in things that are more difficult, and succumb in those that are less." Lastly S. Augustine says, "in Peter walking upon the waters are figured those who are strong in faith, but in Peter doubting, those who are weak in faith."

*Lord save me.* From hence it is clear that Peter did not doubt that He who appeared was Christ. For otherwise he would not have called upon Him in his great peril, but upon God, as shipwrecked sailors are wont to do. His only doubt was whether Christ would allow him to be buried in the waves. Well says S. Augustine (*Serm.* 14. *de verb. Dom.*) "That shaking, brethren, was as it were the death of faith. But when he cried out, faith rose again. He could not have walked unless he had believed, neither could he have begun to sink unless he had doubted. In Peter therefore we must regard the common condition of us all, that if in any temptation the wind is about to sink us in the waves, we should cry aloud to Christ."

**Verse 31-** *And straightway—wherefore didst thou doubt!* Gr. εἰς τί ἐδίστασας, i.e., *why didst thou divide thy mind in two?* For two things were here presented to Peter, that is to say, the strength of the wind making him afraid of being drowned,

*In a ship:* that by it He might go across the Sea of Galilee, or Tiberias, as appears from John vi. 1. For this is the same history which S. John relates at greater length in his sixth chapter. Hence, it is plain that this took place about the Passover.

*A desert place*—Luke adds (ix. 10), *which belonged to Bethsaida.* Adrichomius (in his description of the Holy Land), Jansen, and others think that this desert in which Christ fed the five thousand was called Bethsaida, not because it was close to that city, but on the opposite shore, across the sea of Galilee, between Julias and Dalmanutha. They attempt to prove this, because S. John says Christ went away across the sea of Galilee, and Matthew (xiv. 34) that He passed over the sea.

But I say this desert was near Bethsaida, on the same shore, and so between Bethsaida and Tiberias. This is proved, 1, because Luke says expressly (ix. 10), *He departed by Himself into a desert place, which is Bethsaida.* The Arabic has, *into a desert place near Ale city, which is called Bethsaida.*

2. Burchard testifies the same thing—viz., that this place was near Tiberias, and is called *Mensa* (a table).

3. Because Nicephorus (I 8, c. 3) writes that S. Helena built a church of twelve thrones in the place in which Christ fed the five thousand.

4. Because after Christ had made this multiplication of the loaves, when He fled from the multitude (who wished to make Him a king), He commanded His disciples to sail to Bethsaida, as though it had been nigh at hand. Again, John says (vi. 23): "There came other ships from Tiberias nigh unto the place where they had eaten bread, after that the Lord had given thanks." This place, therefore, was near Tiberias, i.e., between it and Bethsaida. And when they did not find Him there, they went across the sea, where they found Him, as S. John subjoins.

To the argument that Christ is said to have crossed over the sea, I reply: He did not sail over to the opposite shore, but went from one part of the same shore to another place by sea, from one bay of the lake to another, or from one side of a bay to the other side, by a straight course across, instead of going round by the land and following the windings of the shore. So Francis Lucas, Maldonatus, and others. The mountain to which Jesus retired, and from which He came down to the crowds who followed Him (John vi. 3) seems to have formed this bay. Lastly, *across* means the same thing as *beyond*.

*And when the multitudes heard, &c.* You will ask, How could people on foot follow Christ going across the sea in a ship? I answer, that when Christ went into the ship, the multitudes spread abroad His fame through the neighbourhood in all directions. Many, therefore, were stirred up to follow Christ going in a straight course in a ship, by passing round the sea of Galilee, until they came to Bethsaida, and from thence to Capernaum,

where they found Christ, as S. John relates (vi. 24, 25).

**Verse 14-** *And going forth, from His retirement in the desert of Bethsaida, He saw, &c. They were as sheep not having a shepherd, says Mark (vi. 34). Learn hence from Christ, to prefer the care and convenience of others to your own ease and prayers*

**Verse 15-** *When evening was come, &c.—the time of dinner, i.e., of taking food.*

**Verse 16-** *But Jesus said, &c. Christ is preparing the way for the miracle of the multiplication of the bread. Therefore He detained the multitude until the evening, that His disciples might ask Him to dismiss them; whereupon He bids them to give them food, that thereby the miracle might be better attested and the benefit be more grateful, inasmuch as they saw themselves devoid of all means of supplying such vast numbers of people with bread in the desert. S. John adds: “He saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat? And this He said to prove him: for He Himself knew what He would do. Philip answered Him, Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little.” Christ asked Philip rather than the others because he was more candid and docile than the rest, but not so quick-witted, and was accustomed to ask many things that were sufficiently plain—as (in John xiv. 8) he asked Christ, saying, “Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us.” Thus S. Chrysostom, Theophylact, and S. Cyril.*

*Two hundred pence* would amount to about £20, which would nearly suffice to purchase bread for 2000 persons. But here there were 5000 men, besides women and children. Many were also hungry from long fasting. Truly, therefore said Philip that two hundred pennyworth would not suffice for feeding so great a multitude.

**Verse 17-** *They answered Him, &c. These fishes were already cooked, so that they might be immediately distributed by the Apostles, when Christ bade them. S. John explains this verse (vi. 8, 9): “One of His disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, said unto Him, There is a lad here, with five barley-loaves and two small fishes: but what are they among so many?”*

**Verse 18-** *He said, &c. That He might multiply them by His benediction. The Apostles obeyed and brought them. And this their prompt obedience and faith, together with their charity and desire to relieve the hunger of so many thousand people elicited this miracle from Christ.*

**Verse 19-** *And when He had commanded, &c. S. Mark relates the first part of this verse more at length: and commanded them, to make them all sit down by companies upon the green grass. These companies were the several gatherings of people collected together to dine. Whence Luke (ix. 14) calls them feasts (convivia, Vulg.) i.e., companies of guests, in which for the sake of propriety, the men lay down with the men, and the women by themselves with their children, as Matthew here intimates. For formerly people did not sit at tables upon benches, but reclined upon couches, which were drawn close to the tables. Here the grass supplied the place of*

sounding outwardly in their ears, and inwardly in their minds, Christ took away their fear, and filled them with serenity, security, and joy.

Learn from this passage the difference between a good and an evil spirit, that the good spirit may terrify at first, but by and bye gives consolation and joy, as Christ did in this instance; but a bad spirit gives sensual joy in the beginning, but presently causes sorrow, anguish and despair.

**Verse 28-** *Peter answered Him, &c. Calvin accuses Peter of rashness and folly. For Peter was in doubt, he says, whether the appearance were Christ, or the spectre of a demon. For the demon might have pretended that he was Christ, and have bid Peter come to him, and so have drowned him in the sea, as Delrio relates many spectres have done. The Fathers give a twofold answer: 1. Peter knew by His voice, gesture, dress, and much more by an interior recognition, that this was not a demon, but very Christ; when therefore Peter says, *if it be Thou*, it is not the voice of doubt, but of one exulting with joy, and desiring to come quickly to Christ, that he might be near to Him whom he loved above all things. So S. Hilary and S. Chrysostom, “do you perceive with what ardour Peter was burning? Do you see how great his faith was even then? No one loved Jesus so much as he did. Not only did he manifest love, but faith also. He believed not only that Christ was walking upon the sea, but that He was able to give the same power to others. He dared to ask for this power, in order that he might more quickly be with Jesus.”*

2. If you take the words, *if it be thou*, as certainly words of doubt, then it must be said that by the expression *bid me come unto Thee upon the water*, Peter asked that that command should not be given him merely, but that it should be given with power, in such manner, indeed, that together with the command He should infuse such boldness and confidence, that he should not doubt that he would walk safely upon the waves, since Christ bade him. Wherefore as soon as he felt the water beneath his feet, straightway he perceived that it did not yield to him, but that he could walk upon it. Thus Jansen: for God alone is able to glide into the mind, and to give it sure tokens of His presence, even though unknown to us, or unknown save to one who has experienced them, by which He makes the soul certain that it is He Himself who is speaking inwardly, and neither an angel, nor a demon. Such tokens the Prophets had when God revealed to them things to come. For otherwise they would have exposed both God and themselves to ridicule had they declared as God’s revelation, something about to happen, unless they had been certain that it was revealed to them by God, and not by the devil assuming the appearance of God. In this way, it happened to Peter. He asked of Christ both internal and external tokens of security, which should exclude all doubt from his soul, and Christ gave him those tokens, when he said, *Come*. By these tokens was Peter sure that it was the voice of Christ, and not of a phantom or a demon.

been in peril all through the night,” says S. Chrysostom. And they, having rowed for nine hours, had not made more way than about twenty-five or thirty stadia (as S. John says), or about three Italian miles. Thus, during nine hours’ rowing, the Apostles had scarcely got half-way across the Sea of Galilee; for its breadth is about six miles, and its length sixteen (See Josephus, *Bell. Jud.* 3, 18.) He says it is forty stadia in breadth, and one hundred in length. Adrichomius, Jansen, and others think that the Apostles rowed across the entire breadth of the sea. But others think they sailed in an oblique direction, traversing a portion of its length. For the desert was situated between Bethsaida and Tiberias, as I have shown on the thirteenth verse of this chapter.

Christ permitted His disciples to be tossed for so many hours by a tempest. 1. that He might accustom them to endure hardness. 2. that they might more ardently pray for God’s help. 3. that the calming of so fearful a tempest which Christ was about to afford might be more pleasant to them.

Hear Lactantius, (*lib. 4. de vera Sapient. c. 15.*) “But when the disciples of Christ were now about the middle of the sea; then He entered the sea on foot, and followed after them, as though he were walking upon solid ground: not as the poets fable Orion walking in the sea, who bore the waters on His shoulders, a portion of His body being immersed.” Afterwards he quotes the Sibylline verses, in which it was foretold that Christ would calm the winds and raging sea, would cure diseases, and would raise the dead. Hear also S. Augustine (*Serm. 14. de verb. Dom. secundum Matth.*) “*The fourth watch of the night* is the last part of the night, when the night is well nigh finished. Thus Christ will come at the end of the world, when the night of iniquity is over, to judge the quick and the dead.”

**Verse 25-** *Walking upon the sea*, by the divine virtue, which He had as God, and by the gift of agility, which as man, he assumed in time, says Joannes Major, on this passage.

**Verse 26-** *And when they saw him—saying, It is a spirit.* Syriac, *a lying vision, i.e., a spectre*: both because such things are wont to walk by night and in the dark, and to appear to and terrify men, as Delrio shows by many instances (*in Magico*), as well as because, on account of the darkness, they did not recognise that it was Jesus who was walking in this manner, especially as Mark adds, *He would have passed by them*, as though he did not care for them, and had nothing to do with them, whence it follows: *And they cried out*: This confused clamour was elicited by fear, such as is wont to be with sailors when they fall into peril of ship-wreck, and despair of life. The disciples had a twofold cause of fear. To the fear of being buried by the waves was added the fear of the spirit, lest he should sink the ship.

**Verse 27-** *And straightway—be of good cheer.* Gr. *θαρσείτε*, *i.e., resume your failing courage, be brave and confident.* Arabic, *be strong. I am, your Master, whom ye know, whose beneficence and omnipotence ye have experienced in so many miracles which I have wrought. Surely I would not make sport of you, like a phantom; but I intend to deliver you from the tempest, and from your fear. By this voice of Christ*

couches. Christ commanded them to lie down in companies, that no one should be passed over without receiving his portion of bread and fish.

*Looking up, &c.* S. John has, *Jesus took the loaves, and when He had given thanks, He distributed to those who were set down.* Wherefore the heretics explain the word *blessed*, by *He gave thanks*: but wrongly. For Christ, according to His manner, gave thanks to the Father first, then blessed the loaves. For Mark says, *looking up to Heaven he blessed and brake the loaves.* And Luke, *He looked up to Heaven, and blessed them, viz., the loaves, and brake and distributed them.* Christ therefore here *blessed* both God by praising Him and giving Him thanks, and also the loaves themselves. This He did in order that He might draw down Divine grace upon them, by means of which they might be multiplied, and acquire strength and efficacy to nourish, strengthen, and exhilarate so great a multitude, just as much as though they had been fed upon a rich feast of flesh and wine. Christ by this benediction endued these loaves with some, not physical, but moral virtue; that is to say, He ordained and appointed them for miraculous multiplication, whereby He placed His hand, as it were, *i.e., His own Divine virtue upon the loaves*, that they should straightway be really multiplied. And this indeed He did by converting the neighbouring atmosphere, or some other material gradually, but without being perceived, into bread. For God creates nothing *de novo* out of nothing, but produces and transforms all things from the matter which was created at the beginning of the world. In a similar manner He multiplied the meal and the oil of the widow of Sarepta, for the sake of Elias. That these loaves were most excellent and endued with vast nutritive virtue is plain from this, that they were Divine loaves, produced by Christ by a miracle. For all God’s works are perfect. So God, when at the beginning of the world He blessed all the various species of created things, by this blessing endued them with these very powers of generating, propagating, and multiplying themselves: for He said, *increase and multiply.* Thus Christ instituting the Eucharist at the last Supper, blessed the bread and transformed it into His own body. And this multiplication of the loaves by means of Christ’s benediction was a kind of type of the transmutation in the Eucharist; for shortly afterwards He uttered His long discourse upon the Eucharist which S. John gives in his sixth chapter, when he compares the Eucharist to manna. “Not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead, whoso eateth this bread shall live for ever.” S. Augustine gives the reason (*Tract. 24. in John.*) “From whence God multiplies the crops of corn from a few grains, from thence He multiplied the loaves in His own hands. For the power was in the hands of Christ. For those five loaves were, as it were seed, not indeed committed to the earth, but multiplied by Him Who made the earth.” Whence S. Chrysostom says, “Those five loaves were multiplied in the hands of the disciples, and diffused abroad after the manner of a fountain.” As S. Hilary says, “Fragments succeed fragments, and that which was broken off continually escapes from Him who breaks it.” As S. Jerome says, “Whilst they break there was a sowing of food.”



*Tropologically*: Christ here teaches by this action, that bread and riches, corporeal as well as spiritual, are not diminished by being given in alms, but are multiplied a hundred and a thousandfold. Thus S. John, Patriarch of Alexandria, called on account of his liberality, the Almoner, was wont to say that he learnt by daily experience, that the more he gave to the poor, the more he received from God. He used to say, "I shall see, O Lord who will leave off first, Thou in giving to me, or I in distributing to the poor." So Leontius in his *Life*. Pope Adrian II. succeeded Nicolas I. A.D. 914.—this Adrian, says Platina was a friend of Pope Sergius, from whom he once received forty *denarii* as a gift. He went home and gave them to his steward, to distribute them amongst the pilgrims and beggars who were standing in the vestibule of his house. When he attempted to fulfill his master's behest he found that it would be impossible with so small a sum to satisfy so vast a number as required assistance. He returned to Adrian, and explained how the matter stood. Then Adrian took the money, and came to the poor himself, and gave three *denarii* to everyone of them, reserving as many for his own household expenses. The steward marvelled at the miracle. Adrian said to him, do you see how kind and liberal the Lord is, especially to those who are liberal and bountiful to the poor?

S. Lydwyn of Holland, a singular mirror of patience and charity, although she was poor herself was wont diligently to succour the poor. She had a few small coins in a purse: these she was always giving away, when others were supplied from heaven in their place, so that they never failed, but ever increased, and thus her purse came to be called the *Jesu purse*. Read her *Life* in Surius. See 2. Cor. ix. 6. seq., "He that soweth sparingly, shall reap also sparingly: and he that soweth in blessings, (*Vulg.*) *i.e.* many benefits, shall reap in blessings, *i.e.* many benefits." Wherefore when you give a loaf, or a coin to a poor man, you do not lose it, but you sow it; for as from one grain of seed many grains grow, so it is likewise with loaves and money.

**Verse 20-** *They all ate.* There was a vast multitude of women and little ones besides the five thousand men. For the women were more devoted and more curious to behold Christ the new Prophet, than the men were.

*And were filled.* You will say, there is no mention here of wine. How then were they filled, if they drank nothing; for a dinner without anything to drink is a dog-banquet. I answer, Christ did not give them wine, because there were streams of water at hand, of which they might drink.

For to drink water is natural and wholesome, and sufficient for nature. Christ did not wish to excite their throats with wine. God gives food for necessity, not for luxury and gluttony. Thus, an angel brought to Elias in the desert bread and a cruse of water, but no wine. So a raven, by God's command, brought daily half a loaf to S. Paul, the first hermit; but he used to quench his thirst at a neighbouring fountain. God did the same to other saints. Indeed, from Adam until the Deluge—a space of sixteen hundred years, to the time of Noah, who first planted a vineyard—religious men neither ate flesh, nor drank wine; but their food was fruit, and their beverage water. Yet they lived to be nine hundred years old. Abstinence, therefore, is the mother of health, as well as of wisdom and holiness.

*And took up, &c.* They brought back, therefore, more bread than they had brought to Christ at first. For the twelve baskets would contain not five, but thirty or more loaves. It is probable Christ first broke the five loaves with His own hands, and in breaking multiplied them, and placed them in these baskets for distribution. These were afterwards, by His command, distributed by the Apostles to the different companies, and were gradually more and more multiplied; by which means they brought back to Christ as many baskets of fragments as they had received baskets of loaves from Him at the beginning. Cedrenus (*Compend. Histor.*) relates that these twelve baskets were carefully preserved in the Church of the Twelve Apostles, which Constantine the Great built at Constantinople.

In the Greek, these baskets are called *cophini*. They were much used by the Jews. This appears from a line in Juvenal: "The Jews have cophini and hay for furniture"

**Verse 22-** *And straightway Jesus constrained, &c.* Christ did this—first, because He wished to go apart, that He might pray more quietly and instantly, alone; as is plain from the following verse. 2. That He might in this way more easily escape from the crowd, who He knew would wish to make Him a king because He had multiplied the loaves, as S. John teaches (vi. 15). 3. That He might give an occasion for the miracle which followed—His assuaging the tempest in the sea.

**Verse 23-** *And sending away the multitude—i.e.* with His blessing, and prayers for their welfare. Christ prays alone, to show believers that they should avoid a crowd and noise in prayer, and pray to God in secret and silence, with collected minds.

**Verse 24-** *But the ship was tossed, &c.* Gr. *θασσανιζόμενον*, *i.e.*, was vexed, tormented. The Syriac is, *when it was now distant many stadia from all land, it was greatly agitated.*

**Verse 25-** *At the fourth watch, &c.* Gr. *Φυλακῆ*, *i.e.*, guard. The Romans changed guard every three hours of the night. These were their watches both in cities and armies. They changed thus frequently, lest a longer watch should give occasion to sleep, as well as to prevent guile and treachery. If the night were short, they divided it into three watches; if long, into four. The fourth watch, therefore, commenced about the tenth hour of the night, and lasted until the end of the twelfth. The time here spoken of—being immediately after the multiplication of the loaves—was about the Feast of the Passover, as we have already seen. Hence, you may gather that this tempest took place about the vernal equinox, when the day is equal to the night, each lasting about twelve hours. This tempest, then, lasted for nine hours; that is to say, during the three first vigils (or watches) of the night, until the fourth watch, when Christ came to His storm-tossed disciples. "That the Lord came to them in the fourth watch, shews they had