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Father Cantalamessa Says to Waste Not

Pontifical Household Preacher on This Sunday's Gospel

ROME, JULY 28, 2006 ([Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org)).- Here is a translation of a commentary on the Gospel passage of this Sunday's liturgy, by Capuchin Father Raniero Cantalamessa, preacher to the Pontifical Household.

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Gather Up the Fragments Left Over

For several Sundays, the Gospel has been taken from Jesus' discourse on the bread of life in the synagogue of Capernaum, to which the Evangelist John refers. This Sunday's passage comes from the multiplication of loaves and fishes, which is an introduction to the Eucharistic discourse.

It is no accident that the presentation of the Eucharist begins with the account of the multiplication of loaves. What is stated with it is that, in man, the religious dimension cannot be separated from the material dimension. Provision cannot be made for man's spiritual and eternal needs without being concerned, at the same time, about his earthly and material needs.

It was precisely the latter which for an instant was the temptation of the apostles. In another passage of the Gospel one reads that they suggested to Jesus that he dismiss the crowd so that it would find something to eat in neighboring villages.

But Jesus answered: "You give them something to eat!" (Matthew 14:16). With this, Jesus is not asking his disciples to perform miracles. He is asking that they do what they can. To place in common and share what each one has. In arithmetic, multiplication and division are two opposite operations, but in this case they are the same. There is no "multiplication" without "partition" (or sharing)!

This connection between the material and spiritual bread was visible in the way the Eucharist was celebrated in the early days of the Church. The Lord's Supper, then called "agape," took place in the context of a fraternal meal, in which both ordinary bread and Eucharistic bread was shared.

That is why differences between some one who had nothing to eat and some one who became "inebriated" were perceived as scandalous and intolerable (1 Corinthians 11:20-22). Today the Eucharist is no longer celebrated in the context of an ordinary meal, but the contrast between those who have what is superfluous and those who lack what is necessary has not diminished, what is more, it has assumed global dimensions.

On this point, the end of the account also has something to say to us. When all were satiated, Jesus ordered: "Gather up the fragments left over, that nothing may be lost."

We live in a society where waste is habitual. In 50 years, we have gone from a situation in which one went to school or Sunday Mass carrying one's shoes to the threshold, so as not to wear them out, to a situation in

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which virtually new shoes are discarded so as to adapt oneself to the changing fashion.

The most scandalous waste occurs in the food sector. Research carried out by the United States Department of Agriculture reveals that one-fourth of food products end up every day in the garbage, not to speak of what is deliberately destroyed before it reaches the market.

Jesus did not say that day: "Destroy the left-over fragments so that the price of bread and fish will not fall in the market." But it is exactly what is done today.

Under the influence of repetitive advertising, "Spend, don't save!" is at present the codeword in the economy.

Of course, it is not enough to save. Prudence must enable individuals and societies of rich countries to be more generous in their aid to poor countries, otherwise it is more like avarice than prudence.

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