

3.15.2026 Fourth Sunday in Lent (St. John 6:1-14)

The Oxford dictionary lists these four synonyms for Bible: Holy Scripture, Holy Writ, the Good Book, and the Book of Books. The synonym, Book of Books, seems to be an especially appropriate term, because the Bible is not only the “Book of Books” in the sense that it is the ultimate book, the one book that infinitely surpasses all others, but also in a historical and literal sense, the Bible is a book of books. It’s a collection of books, written by God Himself through about 40 inspired human authors, over a period of approximately 1600 years. The human authors lived on three different continents, wrote in three different languages, and came from every walk of life.

The great diversity in the vocations, cultures, languages, and eras in which the human authors lived would lead us to expect the Bible to read like a book of books, merely a compilation of the work and thoughts of many different authors over a span of 16 centuries, but this is not the case at all. From Genesis to Revelation the Bible tells one story. It maintains one consistent, unbroken theme of God’s plan, purpose, and unfailing love for His people and His creation, and the fact that this Book of Books is one coherent, complete story not only points to God as the Divine Author, this also means that if our desire is to understand the text, and far more importantly, to get to know the Author, we should read every single word with the entirety of the Bible in mind.

St. Augustine, speaking about the entirety of the Bible, both the Old and New Testaments, famously stated: “The New is in the Old concealed, the Old is in the New revealed.” His statement describes the unity of the Old and New Testament, and emphasizes the fact that we can’t understand the New without the Old, and likewise, the Law, the prophets, the people and the events described in the Old Testament can only be fully understood by reading the New. In essence, the Old Testament is the foundation. It’s origin of the story and it sets the stage in types and shadows that are fully revealed and perfectly fulfilled in the light of the New Testament of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (Matthew 5:17).

The two testaments contained in the Bible are inseparable, and the Gospel

lesson we read this morning is a good example of why it's so important to know and consider the entire biblical narrative when we're reading Holy Scripture. The miraculous account we just read, about the day Jesus fed a huge, hungry crowd in the wilderness by multiplying a boy's lunch of just five barley loaves and two small fish didn't actually begin at John chapter six, on the day "*Jesus went over the sea of Galilee... and a great multitude followed Him...*" (John 6:1-2). Nor did it begin a few sentences or paragraphs earlier. Rather, the origin of this New Testament story is concealed in the Old, more than a thousand years before that day, at the time of the Exodus when Moses led the people of Israel out of slavery in Egypt, and God miraculously provided manna, bread from heaven to nourish them on their journey through the wilderness and into the promised land.

Israel's Exodus from slavery in Egypt is an origin story and an Old Testament type that finds its fulfillment in the New. Remember Augustine's words: "The New is in the Old concealed, the Old is in the New revealed," and consider these examples as evidence that his statement is correct:

In the Old Testament Exodus, a great multitude followed Moses into the wilderness because they saw the miracles God performed through Him, and this morning we read in the New Testament that a great multitude followed our Lord and God into a deserted wilderness "*because they saw His miracles...*" (John 6:2). At the time of the Exodus, Moses went up to a mountain - Mount Sinai to meet with God, and today we read that God, in the Person of Jesus Christ, "*went up into a mountain, and there He sat with His disciples*" (6:3). In the wilderness God tested Israel through hunger to see if they would trust in Him, or give in to doubt, and in the Gospel we learn that, in the midst of a hungry crowd, Jesus tested Philip's faith by asking, "*Where can we buy bread for these people to eat?*" (vs. 6). In the Old Testament, God provided bread from heaven for the people of Israel, and the New Testament tells us that God, in the Person of Jesus Christ, provided a superabundance of bread to feed and fill this hungry crowd. The meal began with five loaves and two small fish, and after thousands had eaten and were filled, the disciples took up twelve baskets that were leftover.

The bread from heaven that God provided for the people of Israel through the intercession of Moses was a shadow of the bread that God, in the Person of

Jesus Christ, would provide for a hungry crowd in the wilderness. “The New is in the Old concealed, the Old is in the New revealed,” and our reading of the Bible with the entirety of Holy Scripture in mind must not stop there because the Old Testament manna, and the New Testament bread are also a type, they’re each but a shadow of the true Bread with which God feeds His people - the Bread of Heaven, our Savior Christ.

Consider that truth explained in this way: At the Feeding of the 5,000 we read that Jesus *“took the five loaves and two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed and broke and gave the loaves to the disciples; and the disciples gave to the multitudes”* (Matthew 14:19). This four-fold action of taking, blessing, breaking, and giving bread is repeated at the Last Supper. Listen to the way the words of Scripture used in the consecration of Holy Communion remind us of that truth as they describe the Last Supper in this way, *“For in the night in which He was betrayed, He took Bread; and when He had given thanks, He brake it, and gave it to His disciples, saying, Take, eat, this is my Body, which is given for you; Do this in remembrance of Me”* (1 Corinthians 11:23-25).

We know that during the Exodus God provided bread from heaven to feed His people. In the wilderness Jesus took, blessed, broke, and gave bread to feed the hungry crowd that followed Him. At the Last Supper our Lord took, blessed, broke, and gave to His Apostles the true Bread from heaven, and still today, as God leads us on this great Exodus to His kingdom, He provides Bread for our journey by setting this Table in His Church. Through Holy Communion, a Sacrament He instituted, and for our benefit commanded us to continue, God takes, blesses, breaks, and gives to His people the true Bread from heaven - the most precious Body and Blood of His Son Jesus Christ.

The Holy Eucharist is our Bread for the journey, and because we read the Bible in its entirety, as we feast on this Bread in Holy Communion our hearts and minds are filled with images of God’s faithfulness from Genesis to Revelation. We think of His promise in the Garden, manna in the desert, bread in the wilderness, the Last Supper, the Cross, the Resurrection, the Ascension, and certainly the Marriage Supper of the Lamb - the heavenly feast God will prepare for His beloved at the end of time. This is the story of the Book of Books, a story of God faithfully leading and feeding His people

as He sets us free from the slavery and death caused by our rebellion, and draws us into the perfect freedom and everlasting life He purchased for us on the Cross.