

# WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 2

## DO YOU SEE THE LOAVES AND FISHES?

*The multiplication of the loaves and fishes is, of course, iconic. It should be no surprise that today's gospel prompts the image of loaves and fishes as the touchpoint for reflection. Despite only having seven loaves of bread and a few fish by which to feed the crowds who have gathered to hear and be healed by Jesus, all eat, are satisfied and the leftovers fill seven baskets.*

Especially around the holidays, we are accustomed to the feeling of abundance. We are inundated by cookie-swaps and Christmas parties, cocktail hours and gift exchanges. Stores bustle with last-minute shopping and packages are delivered seemingly around-the-clock. Children write long lists of the gifts they hope to receive, and parents, inevitably, go overboard with “just one more thing.”

In contrast, our collective experience of the pandemic over the past year will perhaps always be colored by a perception of scarcity. Shelves were stripped of toilet paper, non-perishables and cleaning supplies — especially in the early months — and the fear that there might not be enough was real. We waited in lines that spanned blocks to purchase groceries and searched the internet ravenously for hand sanitizer, flour, yeast. As limits on who we could see and for how long were placed on us, we longed for a return to the abundance to which we are accustomed. Of course, for many who faced lay-offs, furlough and unemployment, the suffering and fear was indeed quite real and not to be underestimated.



But amidst the scarcity, either real or perceived, we have been met with abundance of a different kind. That is, with more time on our hands than ever before, we invested in relationships and in one another — despite the physical distance between us. Communities came together to ensure those most at-risk for illness were cared for, and families shared time together in ways they had thus far been too busy. Like the disciples in the gospel, where there was thought to be scarcity, with the grace of God, abundance was found.

How have you continued to find abundance in your life where at first you perceived scarcity? How is the experience informing your journey through Advent?

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