

Saturday 5th in Ordinary Time

Gospel text (Mk 8,1-10): A great crowd had gathered, and they had nothing to eat. So Jesus called his disciples and said to them, «I feel sorry for these people because they have been with me for three days and now have nothing to eat. If I send them to their homes hungry, they will faint on the way; some of them have come a long way». His disciples replied, «Where in a deserted place like this could we get enough bread to feed these people?». He asked them, «How many loaves have you?». And they answered, «Seven».

Then He ordered the crowd to sit down on the ground. Taking the seven loaves and giving thanks, he broke them and handed them to his disciples to distribute. And they distributed them among the people. They also had some small fish, so Jesus said a blessing and asked that these be shared as well. The people ate and were satisfied. The broken pieces were collected, seven wicker baskets full of leftovers. Now there had been about four thousand people. Jesus sent them away and immediately got into the boat with his disciples and went to the region of Dalmanutha.

«They have nothing to eat»

Fr. Carles ELÍAS i Cao
(Barcelona, Spain)

Today, in our times of inclemency and anxiety, Jesus also calls us to tell us he feels «sorry for these people» (Mk 8:2). Today, with the peace process in crisis, fear, apathy, banality and evasion may abound: «and now have nothing to eat».

Whom is the Lord calling to? The text says: «So Jesus called his disciples» (Mk 8:1), that is, He calls me, not to send them home hungry, to give them something to eat. Jesus sympathizes with them —this time in heathen land— because they are hungry.

But, alas! Sheltered in our little world, we say we can do nothing about it. «Where in a deserted place like this could we get enough bread to feed these people?» (Mk 8:4). Where shall we find a true and firm word of hope while knowing the Lord will be with us every day till the end of time? How can we tell the believers and the non-believers that violence and death are no solution?

Today, the Lord simply asks us how many loaves have we. Whatever we have, this is what He needs. The text says «seven», a symbol for the heathen, just as twelve was a symbol for the Jewish people. The Lord wants to reach us all —this is why the Church, from its Catholicism, wants to recognize itself— and is asking for your help. Give Him your prayer: it is a loaf of bread! Give Him the Eucharist you have celebrated: it is another loaf of bread! Give Him your decision to reconcile with those you love, with those that have offended you: still another loaf of bread! Give Him your sacramental reconciliation with the Church: another loaf! Give Him your little sacrifice, your fasting, your solidarity: and still another loaf! Give Him your love for his Word that soothes and gives you strength: more bread! Anyway, give Him whatever He asks from you, though you may believe it is not worthwhile.

As St. Gregory of Nyssa says: «He who splits his bread with the poor becomes a part of He who, for us, wanted to be poor. The Lord was poor; do not be afraid of poverty».