Friday of the Second Week of Easter

Gospel text (*Jn* 6:1-15): Jesus went across the Sea of Galilee. A large crowd followed him, because they saw the signs he was performing on the sick. Jesus went up on the mountain, and there he sat down with his disciples. The Jewish feast of Passover was near. When Jesus raised his eyes and saw that a large crowd was coming to him, he said to Philip, “Where can we buy enough food for them to eat?” He said this to test him, because he himself knew what he was going to do. Philip answered him, “Two hundred days’ wages worth of food would not be enough for each of them to have a little.” One of his disciples, Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, said to him, “There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish; but what good are these for so many?”

Jesus said, “Have the people recline.” Now there was a great deal of grass in that place. So the men reclined, about five thousand in number. Then Jesus took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed them to those who were reclining, and also as much of the fish as they wanted. When they had had their fill, he said to his disciples, “Gather the fragments left over, so that nothing will be wasted.” So they collected them, and filled twelve wicker baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves that had been more than they could eat. When the people saw the sign he had done, they said, “This is truly the Prophet, the one who is to come into the world.” Since Jesus knew that they were going to come and carry him off to make him king, he withdrew again to the mountain alone.

“He himself knew what he was going to do”

Fr. Stefanus Albertus HERRY NUGROHO
(Bandung, Indonesia)

Today, the Gospel reminds us of a miracle in front of five thousand men when “Jesus took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed them to those who were reclining, and also as much of the fish as they wanted” (Jn 6:11). This miracle was not merely a need to show off but held a much deeper meaning. Jesus was driven by God’s love for those people. We talk about faith and love every time we try to understand what propels Jesus towards action.

The large number of people were moved by faith and trust in Him. Coming from everywhere, they needed to fulfill their hunger and thirst for the truth and love of God which they sought and found in person. Jesus saw what they needed.

We Christians are able to manifest God's love right now and wherever we are. One should start by respecting our neighbors to understand what their needs are. From there one may emulate Jesus: endeavor to improve the life of neighbors. These acts are not to be taken lightly. It is no less than real salvation from God through your tiny hands.

To the children in Bulgaria, Pope Francis remarked in 2019: "Some miracles can only take place if we have a heart like yours: a heart capable of sharing, dreaming, feeling gratitude, trusting and respecting other people."

The Lord needs our tiny hands as His partner to perform some miracles. However, we should also consider the risk of being a partner of the Lord: it may drive other people to give you positions of power. If that position helps you to help them, why not? If, the position keeps you from helping, you need another place to continue God's mission as Jesus did. "Since Jesus knew that they were going to come and carry him off to make him king, he withdrew again to the mountain alone" (Jn 6:15).

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- "Jesus was not relying on an adequate supply of material goods (...). What human reason did not dare to hope became a reality with Jesus thanks to a young boy's generous heart." (Saint John Paul II)

- "Jesus does not allow us to stop there and reduce man's needs to bread, to biological and material necessities. 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God' (Mt 4:4; Deut 8:3)." (Benedict XVI)

- "By freeing some individuals from the earthly evils (...), Jesus performed messianic signs. Nevertheless he did not come to abolish all evils here below, but to free men from the gravest slavery, sin, which (...) causes all forms of human bondage." (Catechism of the Catholic Church, Nº 549)

Other comments

"He said this to test him, because he himself knew what he was going to do"

Fr. Jordi POU i Sabater

(Sant Jordi Desvalls, Girona, Spain)

Today, we read in the Gospel the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves: “Then Jesus took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed them to those who were reclining, and also as much of the fish as they wanted” (Jn 6:11). The utter devastation of the Apostles facing so many hungry people makes us think of today's crowds, not only hungry, but much worse: far away from God, with a “spiritual anorexia”, preventing any participation in Easter and the possibility of meeting Jesus. We do not know how to reach so many people... In today's reading, a message of hope is fluttering: lack of means does not matter; supernatural resources do; let us not be “realistic”, but “full of trust” in God. Thus, when Jesus asks Philip where could they buy some bread for all those people, “He said this to test him, because he himself knew what he was going to do” (Jn 6:5-6). The Lord expects us to trust Him.

When looking at these “signs of the times”, we are not expecting passivity (laziness, languor for lack of fighting...), but hope: to work a miracle, the Lord wants the Apostles’ courage and dedication and the generosity of the boy who is willing to give some barley loaves and the two fish. Jesus also multiplies our faith, obedience and boldness, even though we cannot see right away the fruit of our efforts, just as the farmer cannot see the stalk already appearing after sowing. Saint Josemaria Escrivá said: “We must, then, have faith and not be dispirited. We must not be stopped by any kind of human calculation. To overcome the obstacles we have to throw ourselves into the task so that the very effort we make will open up new paths”... that will pop up unexpectedly.

Let us not wait for the right moment to place whatever we have at our disposal: but as soon as possible! for Jesus is waiting for us to work the miracle. Saint John Paul II wrote: “The troubles the world scene presents at the beginning of the new millennium lead us to think that only an intercession from above may allow us to expect a less darker future.” Let us, therefore, turn to the Virgin Mary with the Rosary, for her mediation has always been felt in so many frail moments Mankind has experienced throughout history.