Thursday of the Third Week of Easter

Gospel text (*Jn* 6:44-51): Jesus said to the crowds: “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draw him, and I will raise him on the last day. It is written in the prophets: They shall all be taught by God. Everyone who listens to my Father and learns from him comes to me. Not that anyone has seen the Father except the one who is from God; he has seen the Father. Amen, amen, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your ancestors ate the manna in the desert, but they died; this is the bread that comes down from heaven so that one may eat it and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give is my Flesh for the life of the world.”

“I am the living bread that came down from heaven”

Fr. Pere MONTAGUT i Piquet
(Barcelona, Spain)

Today we sing to the Lord from whom comes glory and triumph. The Risen One presents himself to his Church with that "I am who I am" that identifies him as the source of salvation: "I am the bread of life" (Jn 6:48). In thanksgiving, the community gathered around the Living One lovingly knows him and accepts God's instruction, now recognized as the teaching of the Father. Christ, immortal and glorious, reminds us once again that the Father is the true protagonist of all. Those who listen to him and believe live in communion with the one who comes from God, with the only one who has seen Him, and thus, faith is the beginning of eternal life.

The living bread is Jesus. He is not food that we assimilate within ourselves, but it is He who assimilates us to Himself. He makes us hunger for God, thirsty to hear his Word, which is joy and gladness of the heart. The Eucharist is a foretaste of heavenly glory: "breaking one and the same bread, which is the medicine of immortality, and the antidote to prevent us from dying, which causes that we should live for ever in Jesus Christ" (Saint Ignatius of Antioch). Communion with the flesh of the risen Christ must accustom us to all that comes down from heaven, that is, to ask, to receive, and to embrace our true condition: we are made for God, and only He fully satisfies our spirit.

But this living bread will not only allow us to live one day beyond physical death; it is given to us now "for the life of the world" (Jn 6:51). The plan of the Father, who did not create us to die, is linked to faith

and love. He desires a present, free, and personal response to his initiative. Every time we eat this bread, let us enter into Love itself! We no longer live for ourselves; we no longer live in error. The world is still precious because there is one who continues to love it to the extreme, because there is a Sacrifice from which even those who ignore it benefit.

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “For naught else is brought about by the partaking of the Body and Blood of Christ than that we pass into that which we then take, and both in spirit and in body carry everywhere Him, in and with Whom we were dead, buried, and rose again.” (Saint Leo the Great)

- “Let us live the Eucharist with the spirit of faith, of prayer, of forgiveness, of repentance, of communal joy, of concern for the needy, in the certainty that the Lord will fulfil what he has promised us: eternal life.” (Francis)

- “The Eucharist is ‘the source and summit of the Christian life’ Second Vatican Council. ‘The other sacraments, and indeed all ecclesiastical ministries and works of the apostolate, are bound up with the Eucharist and are oriented toward it. For in the blessed Eucharist is contained the whole spiritual good of the Church, namely Christ himself, our Pasch’ (Second Vatican Council).” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, № 1324)