Saturday of the Third Week of Easter

Gospel text (*Jn* 6:60-69): Many of the disciples of Jesus who were listening said, “This saying is hard; who can accept it?” Since Jesus knew that his disciples were murmuring about this, he said to them, “Does this shock you? What if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? It is the Spirit that gives life, while the flesh is of no avail. The words I have spoken to you are Spirit and life. But there are some of you who do not believe.” Jesus knew from the beginning the ones who would not believe and the one who would betray him. And he said, “For this reason I have told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by my Father.”

As a result of this, many of his disciples returned to their former way of life and no longer walked with him. Jesus then said to the Twelve, “Do you also want to leave?” Simon Peter answered him, “Master, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and are convinced that you are the Holy One of God.”

“You have the words of eternal life”

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Today we have just read in the Gospel Jesus' discourse on the Bread of Life, which is He himself who will be given to us as food for our souls and for our Christian life. And, as is often the case, we have witnessed two very different, if not opposing, reactions from those who listen to him.

For some, his language is too harsh, incomprehensible to their mentality closed to the saving Word of the Lord, and Saint John says—with a certain sadness—that "As a result of this, many of his disciples returned to their former way of life and no longer walked with him" (Jn 6:66). And the same Evangelist gives us a clue to understand the attitude of these people: they did not believe, they were not willing to accept Jesus' teachings, which were often incomprehensible to them.

On the other hand, we see the reaction of the Apostles, represented by Saint Peter: "Master, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe" (Jn 6:68-69). It's not that the Twelve are smarter than the others, nor better, nor perhaps more knowledgeable about the Bible; what

they are is simpler, more trusting, more open to the Spirit, more docile. We occasionally catch them in the pages of the Gospels making mistakes, not understanding Jesus, arguing about which of them is the most important, even correcting the Master when he announces his passion; but we always find them at his side, faithful. Their secret: they truly loved him.

Saint Augustine expresses it this way: "Good habits do not leave a mark on the soul, but good loves do (...). This is truly love: to obey and believe in the one you love." In light of this Gospel, we can ask ourselves: where do I place my love? What faith and obedience do I have in the Lord and in what the Church teaches? What docility, simplicity, and trust do I live with the things of God?

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “Eucharistic Bread, medicine of immortality, antidote to death.” (Saint Ignatius of Antioch)

- “‘Will you also go away?’. This disturbing provocation resounds in our hearts and expects a personal answer from each one.” (Benedict XVI)

- “The first announcement of the Eucharist divided the disciples, just as the announcement of the Passion scandalized them (...). The Eucharist and the Cross are stumbling blocks (...). ‘Will you also go away?’ (Jn 6:67). The Lord's question echoes through the ages, as a loving invitation to discover that only he has ‘the words of eternal life’ (Jn 6:68).” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, Nº 1336)