

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' speech about the Bread of Life, which is Himself, offering us His body as nourishment for our souls and for our Christian life. And, as it usually happens, we have to contemplate two different —if not opposite— reactions, from those who are listening to Him.

His language is too hard for some, too incomprehensible for their mentality, closed to the Lord's saving Word; St. John says, somewhat sadly, 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). It is the same evangelist who gives us a clue to help us understand the attitude of these persons: they would not believe, they would not be willing to accept Jesus' teachings, which were, so often, inexplicable for them.

But, on the other hand, we can see the Apostles' reaction, led by St. Peter: “Master, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe” (Jn 6:68-69). It is not that the twelve are smarter, or even better, nor do they understand the Bible any better; but they are indeed more modest, more trusting, more open to the Holy Spirit, more docile. Every now and then, we can spot them in the Gospels when making mistakes, unable to understand Jesus, arguing over who is more important and even daring to correct the Master when He announces to them His Passion; but they are always faithful, by His side. Their secret: they truly loved Him.

Saint Augustine expresses it this way: “Good habits leave no trace in our soul, but good loves does... Truly, this is all love is about: to obey and believe whom you love.” In the light of this Gospel we may wonder: where have I placed my love? What faith and what obedience do I have for the Lord and for what the Church teaches? What kind of docility, simplicity and trust do I live with regards to God's things?

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, N° 1336)