

Saturday of the Third Week of Easter

Gospel text (Jn 6,60-69): After hearing his doctrine, many of Jesus' followers said, «This language is very hard! Who can accept it?». Jesus was aware that his disciples were murmuring about this and so He said to them, «Does this offend you? Then how will you react when you see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? It is the spirit that gives life; the flesh cannot help. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life. But among you there are some who do not believe». From the beginning, Jesus knew who would betray him. So he added, «As I have told you, no one can come to me unless it is granted by the Father».

After this many disciples withdrew and no longer followed him. Jesus asked the Twelve, «Will you also go away?» Peter answered him, «Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We now believe and know 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' allocution about the Bread of Life, which is Himself, offering us his body as nurture 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 «after this many disciples withdrew and no longer followed Him» (Jn 6:66). It is the same evangelist who gives us a clue to help us understanding 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: «Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We now 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 them his Passion; but they are always faithful, by his side. Their secret: they truly loved Him.

St. Augustine expresses it this way: «Good habits leave no trace in our soul, but good loves do (...). 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 have I to the Lord and to what the Church teaches? What kind of docility, simplicity and trust do I live with regards to God's things?