Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (B)

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.

«A large crowd followed him»

Fr. Pere CALMELL i Turet
(Barcelona, Spain)

Today, we contemplate how both human and supernatural love can grow in us, given that we use the same heart to love both man and God.

Generally speaking love starts to grow in the human heart with the progressive discovery of that which is attractive in the other person: their friendliness, their goodness. This is the case of the “boy who has five barley loaves and two fish” (Jn 6:9). He gives Jesus all he has got with him, the bread and the fish,

because he has let himself be won over by the attractiveness of Jesus. —Have I discovered the attractiveness of the Lord?

The next step is falling in love, the consequence of feeling a response. “A large crowd followed him, because they saw the signs he was performing on the sick” (Jn 6:2). Jesus listened to them; He paid attention to them because He knew what they needed.

Jesus Christ finds an attraction in me and desires that I fulfill myself both humanly and supernaturally. He loves me as I am, in all my weakness, because I ask for forgiveness and I continue trying with his help.

“Jesus realized that they would come and take him by force to make him king; so He fled to the hills by himself” (Jn 6:15). He will say to them the next day: “Amen, amen, I say to you, you are looking for me not because you saw signs but because you ate the loaves and were filled.” (Jn 6:26). Saint Augustine writes: “Many are those who look for Jesus guided solely by worldly interests! (…) Rarely do they seek Jesus for Jesus.”

The fullness of love is love that gives of itself, when you look for the good of the loved one without expecting anything in return, even when it entails personal sacrifice.

Today, I can say: “Lord, you make us share in the miracle of the Eucharist. We beg you not to hide away. Live with us. May we see you, may we touch you, may we feel you. May we want to be beside you all the time, and have you as the King of our lives and of our work” (Saint Josemaría).