Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (B)

Gospel text (*Jn* 6:24-35): When the crowd saw that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they themselves got into boats and came to Capernaum looking for Jesus. And when they found him across the sea they said to him, “Rabbi, when did you get here?” Jesus answered them and said, “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. Do not work for food that perishes but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For on him the Father, God, has set his seal.” So they said to him, “What can we do to accomplish the works of God?” Jesus answered and said to them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in the one he sent.” So they said to him, “What sign can you do, that we may see and believe in you? What can you do? Our ancestors ate manna in the desert, as it is written: He gave them bread from heaven to eat.” So Jesus said to them, “Amen, amen, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave the bread from heaven; my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.”

So they said to him, “Sir, give us this bread always.” Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me will never hunger, and whoever believes in me will never thirst.”

«‘Sir, give us this bread always’. ‘I am the bread of life’»

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Today, we can appreciate different behaviors in the people looking for Jesus: some have eaten the material bread while others are requesting a miraculous sign when the Lord has just made a huge one; still, others, have eagerly run to meet him to make a spiritual communion —in good faith we could say—: “Sir, give us this bread always” (Jn 6:34).

Jesus must have been very pleased with their efforts to seek and follow Him. He was teaching them all while speaking to them in different ways. To some of them, he says: “Do not work for food that perishes but for the food that endures for eternal life” (Jn 6:27). And those who ask: “What can we do to accomplish the works of God?” (Jn 6:28) will receive in that Capernaum synagogue a specific advice, where the Lord

promises them the Holy Communion: “Believe.”

You and I, who are trying to immerse ourselves in the pages of this Gospel, do we see our attitude reflected therein? While trying to revive this scene: which are the most pointed expressions for us? Are we persistent enough in our efforts to find Jesus after the many gifts, doctrine, examples and lessons we have received from Him? Do we know how to make a good spiritual communion? ‘Lord, give us always this bread, that satiates our hunger’?

The best shortcut to find Jesus is through Mary. She is the Mother of the Family that dispenses the white bread for the children in the warmth of the paternal home. The Mother of the Church that wants to feed her children so that they may grow strong, be happy, may carry out a blessed task and be communicative. St. Ambrose, in his work “On the mysteries”, writes: “And the Sacrament we carry out is the body born of the Virgin Mary. Can you request the nature's order in the body of Christ, when Jesus was conceived by Mary above every natural law?”

The Church, mother and teacher, teaches us that the Holy Eucharist is a “sacrament of piety, sign of unity, bond of charity, the paschal banquet "in which Christ is received, the soul is filled with grace and we are given a pledge of the glory that is to be ours” (II Vatican Council).

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- "The bread of God came down from heaven for me, which gives life to this world. This is the bread of life: and he who eats life cannot die. For how can he die who is nourished by life?" (Saint Ambrose of Milan)

- “What a great dignity has been bestowed on us! The Son of God gives himself to us in the Most Holy Sacrament of his Body and Blood. How infinitely great is God's generosity!” (Saint John Paul II)

- “Christ himself declared that he was marked with his Father's seal. Christians are also marked with a seal... This seal of the Holy Spirit marks our total belonging to Christ, our enrollment in his service for ever...” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, n. 1296)