

# Monday of the Eighteenth Week in Ordinary Time

**Gospel text (Mt 14,13-21): On hearing the death of John the Baptist, Jesus set out secretly by boat for a secluded place. But the people heard of it, and they followed him on foot from their towns. When Jesus went ashore, He saw the crowd gathered there and He had compassion on them. And He healed their sick.**

**Late in the afternoon, his disciples came to him and said, «We are in a lonely place and it is now late. You should send these people away, so they can go to the villages and buy something for themselves to eat». But Jesus replied, «They do not need to go away; you give them something to eat». They answered, «We have nothing here but five loaves and two fishes». Jesus said to them, «Bring them here to me».**

**Then He made everyone sit down on the grass. He took the five loaves and the two fishes, raised his eyes to heaven, pronounced the blessing, broke the loaves and handed them to the disciples to distribute to the people. And they all ate, and everyone had enough; then the disciples gathered up the leftovers, filling twelve baskets. About five thousand men had eaten there besides women and children.**

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*«Raised his eyes to heaven»*

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Today, the Gospel touches our “mental pockets”... This is why, as in Jesus' times, the voice of the prudent ones can be heard weighing whether this is worth our while. When they saw it was getting late, the disciples, who did not know how to handle the crowd gathered around Jesus, found a reasonable option: «they can go to the villages and buy something for themselves to eat» (Mt 14:15). Little did they expect their Lord and Master to break this sensible advice by telling them: «you give them something to eat» (Mt 14:16).

A popular saying goes: «He who does not count on God, does not know how to count». And it is true, the disciples did not know —neither do we— how to count for they forgot, as we often forget, the most important part of the addition: God himself is always amongst us.

The disciples did their calculation right; they figured out the exact number of loaves and fishes, but how could they possibly divide them amongst such a huge crowd?; this is why they cautiously said: «We have nothing here but five loaves and two fishes» (Mt 14:17). But they did not realize they also had Jesus—true God and true man— among them!

By quoting St. Josemaria Escrivà, it would not do us any harm to remember here that: «It is a good thing in our apostolate —it is in fact an obligation—to figure out our earthly means ( $2+2=4$ ), but do not ever forget! you must also luckily count on another addend: God +2 +2...». Christian optimism is not based upon the absence of difficulties, of resistance and of personal errors, but upon God who says: «And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age» (Mt 28:20)

It would be good that both you and I, when facing our own difficulties, and prior to granting a death sentence to the boldness and optimism of the Christian spirit, we could rely upon God. If only we could say along with St. Francis that great prayer: «Wherever there is hate let me put love»; that is, wherever my accounts do not square up, let me rely upon God.