

Monday of the Eighteenth Week in Ordinary Time

Gospel text (Mt 14:13-21): When Jesus heard of the death of John the Baptist, he withdrew in a boat to a deserted place by himself. The crowds heard of this and followed him on foot from their towns. When he disembarked and saw the vast crowd, his heart was moved with pity for them, and he cured their sick.

When it was evening, the disciples approached him and said, “This is a deserted place and it is already late; dismiss the crowds so that they can go to the villages and buy food for themselves.” He said to them, “There is no need for them to go away; give them some food yourselves.” But they said to him, “Five loaves and two fish are all we have here.”

Then he said, “Bring them here to me,” and he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, he said the blessing, broke the loaves, and gave them to the disciples, who in turn gave them to the crowds. They all ate and were satisfied, and they picked up the fragments left over— twelve wicker baskets full. Those who ate were about five thousand men, not counting women and children.

“Looking up to heaven”

Fr. Xavier ROMERO i Galdeano
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Today, the Gospel touches our “mental pockets”... This is why, as in Jesus' time, 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 food for themselves” (Mt 14:15). Little did they expect their Lord and Master to break this sensible advice by telling them: “give them some food yourselves” (Mt 14:16).

A popular saying goes: “He who does not count on God when counting, 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: “Five loaves and two fish are all we have here” (Mt 14:17). But they did not realize they also had Jesus—true God and true man—among them!

About all this, it would not do us any harm to remember what Saint Josemaria Escrivá said: “In your apostolic undertakings you are right — it's your duty — to consider what means the world can offer you ($2+2=4$), but don't forget — ever! — that, fortunately, your calculations must include another term: $God+2+2...$ ” Christian optimism is not based upon the absence of difficulties, of resistance and of personal errors, but upon God who says: “And behold, I am with you always, until the 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: “Where there is hatred, let us sow love”; that is, wherever my accounts do not square up, let me rely upon God.

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

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“We may not be able to give much but we can always give the joy that springs from a heart that is in love with God.” (Saint Teresa of Calcutta)

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“Those few loaves and fish, shared and blessed by God, were enough for everyone. And pay heed! It isn’t magic, it’s a “sign”: a sign that calls for faith in God, provident Father.” (Francis)

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“Communion with the Body and Blood of Christ increases the communicant's union with the Lord, forgives his venial sins, and preserves him from grave sins. Since receiving this sacrament strengthens the bonds of charity between the communicant and Christ, it also reinforces the unity of the Church as the Mystical Body of Christ.” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 1,416)