Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (B)

Gospel text (*Jn* 6:41-51): The Jews murmured about Jesus because he said, “I am the bread that came down from heaven,” and they said, “Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph? Do we not know his father and mother? Then how can he say, ‘I have come down from heaven’?” Jesus answered and said to them, “Stop murmuring among yourselves. No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draw him, and I will raise him on the last day. It is written in the prophets: They shall all be taught by God. Everyone who listens to my Father and learns from him comes to me. Not that anyone has seen the Father except the one who is from God; he has seen the Father. Amen, amen, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your ancestors ate the manna in the desert, but they died; this is the bread that comes down from heaven so that one may eat it and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world.”

«No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draw him»

Fr. Lluc TORCAL Monk of Santa Maria de Poblet
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Today, the Gospel shows how disconcerted Jesus' countrymen were when in his presence: “Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph? Do we not know his father and mother? Then how can he say, ‘I have come down from heaven’?” (Jn 6:42). The life of Jesus amongst his own people had been so normal that, when He began to proclaim the Kingdom, those who knew him were shocked at what He was saying.

What Father was Jesus referring to, whom nobody had ever seen before? Which could be that living bread coming from heaven that those who eat of it would live forever? He denied it was the manna in the desert because those who ate it also died. “The bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world.” (Jn 6:51). Could his flesh be food for us? The baffling doubts Jesus was spreading amongst the Jews could also embarrass us should we not be able to answer a question basic for our Christian life: Who is Jesus?

Many men and women before us have asked themselves the same question, have personally answered it, have gone to Jesus, have followed Him and now they enjoy an endless life full of love. And those who now

may come to Jesus, He will raise them up on the last day. (cf. Jn 6:44). John Cassian exhorted his monks by telling them: "'Come close to God, and He will come close to you', because 'nobody can come to Jesus unless he is drawn by the Father who sent Him' (...). In the Gospel we listen to the Lord inviting us to join Him: "Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest." Let us embrace the Word of the Gospel that brings us near Jesus every day; let us welcome the invitation of the very Gospel to enter into communion with Him by eating his flesh, because "This is the true food, Christ's flesh, which being Word has become flesh, as it is said 'And the Word became flesh'" (Origen).

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- "There is a spiritual life that we share with the angels of heaven and with the divine spirits, for like them we have been formed in the image and likeness of God. The bread that is necessary for living this life is the grace of the Holy Spirit and the love of God" (Saint Lawrence of Brindisi)

- "Let us live the Eucharist with the spirit of faith, of prayer, of forgiveness, of repentance, of communal joy, of concern for the needy and for the needs of so many brothers and sisters, in the certainty that the Lord will fulfil what he has promised us: eternal life" (Francis)

- "... The whole Christian life is a communion with each of the divine persons, without in any way separating them..." (Catechism of The Catholic Church, Nº 259)