

Twenty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time (B)

Gospel text (Jn 6,60-69): After hearing his doctrine, many of Jesus' followers said, «This language is very hard! Who can accept it?». Jesus was aware that his disciples were murmuring about this and so he said to them, «Does this offend you? Then how will you react when you see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? It is the spirit that gives life; the flesh cannot help. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life. But among you there are some who do not believe». From the beginning, Jesus knew who would betray him. So He added, «As I have told you, no one can come to me unless it is granted by the Father».

After this many disciples withdrew and no longer followed him. Jesus asked the Twelve, «Will you also go away?». Peter answered him, «Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We now believe and know that you are the Holy One of God».

«Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life»

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Today, the Gospel takes us to Capernaum where, many who have seen his miracles are following Jesus, especially those that were present at the spectacular multiplication of the loaves and fishes. As it is often said, Jesus, in that town, chanced to socially die of success; they even wanted to appoint him as their king. It is a key moment in Jesus' catechesis. It is when He begins to clearly divulge the supernatural dimension of his message. And, as Jesus is such a good catechist, the perfect priest, the best bishop and Pope, He lets them go away; He is sad, but He is faithful to his message and He will not be blinded by popular success.

A great priest used to say that, throughout the history of the Church, many who looked like essential and vital columns of the Church had fallen down: «Many disciples withdrew and no longer followed him» (Jn 6:66). You and I may fall, “disregard”, go away, criticize, “follow our own whims and fancies”. Humbly and confidently let us tell Jesus that, today, tomorrow and always, we want to remain faithful to Him; let us ask him to help us realizing the evangelic futility of trying to debate God's teachings, or those of the Church, on the grounds that “I do not understand them”: «Lord, to whom shall we go?» (Jn 6:68). We should demand a better supernatural sense. The Words of Eternal Life can only be found in Jesus and within his Church: «You have the words of eternal life?» (Jn 6:68).

As Peter already knew, we also know that Jesus speaks to us with a supernatural language, a language we must correctly tune in to be able to fully understand its message; otherwise, we can only hear incoherent and unpleasant sounds; we must be very careful to fine-tune the right channel. As it happened to Peter, in our life as Christians we also have moments where we must reiterate that we are in Jesus and we want to remain in Him. Peter loved Jesus Christ, and this is why he stays; the others just wanted Him for the bread, for the “candies”, for political reasons, so they choose to go away. Love and trust are the secret of faithfulness. Let us ask *Virgo fidelis* to help us today and now to be faithful to the Church we have.