Thursday of the Second Week in Ordinary Time

Gospel text (*Mk* 3:7-12): Jesus withdrew toward the sea with his disciples. A large number of people followed from Galilee and from Judea. Hearing what he was doing, a large number of people came to him also from Jerusalem, from Idumea, from beyond the Jordan, and from the neighborhood of Tyre and Sidon. He told his disciples to have a boat ready for him because of the crowd, so that they would not crush him. He had cured many and, as a result, those who had diseases were pressing upon him to touch him. And whenever unclean spirits saw him they would fall down before him and shout, “You are the Son of God.” He warned them sternly not to make him known.

“A large number of people came to him also from Jerusalem, from Idumea, from beyond the Jordan, and from the neighborhood of Tyre and Sidon”

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Today, with the baptisms by John in the Jordan still recent, we should all remember the kind of conversion brought about as a result of our baptism. We have all been baptized into one Lord, into one only faith, “For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body” (1Co 12:13). This is the aim of unity: to form a single body, to be a single unity in Christ, so that the world may believe.

In today's Gospel we see “A large crowd from Galilee followed him" and "a great number of people” coming from other places surrounded the Lord (cf. Mk 3:7-8). And He paid heed to all, procuring, without exception, their good. We have to keep this in mind during the Octave of Prayer for Christian Unity.

Let us realize how, throughout the centuries, we Christians have divided ourselves into Catholics, Orthodox, Anglicans, Lutherans and a long list of other Christian confessions. This evidences a historic sin against one of the essential points of our Church: its unity.

But, let us face today's ecclesial reality: Our bishoprics, our parishes, our Christian groups and associations. Are we truly "One"? Will this type of unity really be a motive for conversion for those who are away from the Church? “That they also may be in us, that the world may believe” (Jn 17:21), pleaded Jesus to the Father. Our challenge is that the others may see a group of believers united to one another, gathered by the Holy Spirit, under the Church of Christ: “All the believers were one in heart and mind.” (cf. Acts 4:32-34).

Let us remember that, the unity of the Assembly must be manifested as a fruit of the Eucharist —as well as the union of each one with Jesus— since we feed on the same Bread to be one body. Therefore, what the sacraments stand for, and the graces they contain, demand we work towards communion with all people. Our conversion is to the Unity of the Trinity (which is a gift from Heaven), and our sanctifying task cannot avert the gestures of communion, understanding, welcome and forgiveness towards others.

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “This is the way in which we find our Saviour: Jesus Christ. By Him we look up to the heights of heaven. By Him we behold, as in a glass, His immaculate and most excellent visage.” (Saint Clement of Rome)

- “His person [Jesus] is nothing but love. The signs he works, especially in favour of sinners, the poor, the marginalized, the sick, and the suffering, are all meant to teach mercy.” (Francis)

- “By freeing some individuals from the earthly evils of hunger, injustice, illness and death, Jesus performed messianic signs. Nevertheless he did not come to abolish all evils here below, but to free men from the gravest slavery, sin.” (Catechism Of The Catholic Church, Nº 549)