Monday of the Fifth Week in Ordinary Time

Gospel text (*Mk* 6:53-56): After making the crossing to the other side of the sea, Jesus and his disciples came to land at Gennesaret and tied up there. As they were leaving the boat, people immediately recognized him. They scurried about the surrounding country and began to bring in the sick on mats to wherever they heard he was. Whatever villages or towns or countryside he entered, they laid the sick in the marketplaces and begged him that they might touch only the tassel on his cloak; and as many as touched it were healed.

"And as many as touched it were healed"

Fr. John GRIECO
(Chicago, United States)

Today, in the Gospel we see the tremendous power of contact with Our Lord's person: "They laid the sick in the marketplaces and begged him that they might touch only the tassel on his cloak; and as many as touched it were healed" (Mk 6,56). The slightest physical touch can work miracles for those who approach Christ with faith. His power to cure overflows from His loving heart and extends even to His garments. His ability and willingness to heal is both abundant and easily accessible.

This passage can help us reflect on how we receive Our Lord in Holy Communion. Do we do so with faith that this contact with Christ can work miracles in our lives? More than merely touching the "fringe of his cloak", we receive Christ's very Body into our bodies. More than merely healing our physical infirmities, Communion heals our souls and grants them a share in God's own life. St. Ignatius of Antioch thus calls the Eucharist, "the medicine of immortality, and the antidote to prevent us from dying, [which causes] that we should live forever in Jesus Christ."

Taking advantage of this "medicine of immortality" consists in being healed of whatever separates us from God and others. Being cured by Christ in the Eucharist thus entails overcoming our self-absorption. As Benedict XVI teaches, "Nourishing ourselves with Christ is the way to avoid becoming extraneous or indifferent to the fate of the brothers (…). A Eucharistic spirituality is the true antidote to the individualism and selfishness that often characterize daily life, and leads to the rediscovery of gratuity, of the centrality of relationships —starting with the family— with particular attention to healing the wounds of disrupted ones."

Just as those who were cured of their infirmities by touching His garments, we too can be cured of our egoism and our isolation from others by receiving Our Lord with faith.

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “To us Christ is all! if you are oppressed by injustice, he is justice; if you are in need of help, he is strength; if you fear death, he is life; if you desire Heaven, he is the way; if you are in the darkness, he is light.” (Saint Ambrose of Milan)

- “After having finished the creation, God did not ‘withdraw’: He can still work. He remains the Creator and therefore always has the possibility to ‘intervene’. God is still God!” (Benedict XVI)

- “Christ invites his disciples to follow him by taking up their cross in their turn. By following him they acquire a new outlook on illness and the sick. Jesus associates them with his own life of poverty and service. He makes them share in his ministry of compassion and healing (...)” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, Nº 1506)

Other comments

“As they were leaving the boat, people immediately recognized him “

Fr. Joaquim MONRÓS i Guitart
(Tarragona, Spain)

Today, we see the faith of the people of the countryside where Jesus had landed bringing salvation to them. Our Lord is the owner of our body and soul; and they had no doubt that in bringing their sick to Him, they would be cured: “and as many as touched it were healed.” (Mk 6:56). Today as ever, we have many who are sick in their body and in their soul. We must therefore use our very best efforts, both human and supernatural, to bring our relatives, friends and acquaintances as close as possible to our Lord. In the first place, we can achieve it by praying for their spiritual and physical health. When we are sick we do not hesitate to find out whether an appropriate treatment exists, or whether there is a doctor who can take care of us right away.

When it is a matter of spiritual “sickness” (normally visible, externally, as our son, brother or parents not attending the Sunday services), in addition to praying, it would be convenient to speak to him/her about the remedy, maybe by transmitting him/her a thought or some motivating factor that we might get from the Magistery (for instance, from the Apostolic Epistle on The Day of our Lord, by John Paul II, or from some of the points of the Catechism of the Catholic Church).

If the “sick brother is somebody as a public authority, who tries to justify an unjust law —as, for instance, abortion legalization— let us not doubt —in addition to our prayers— to seek an opportunity to let him/her know —personally or in writing— our testimony regarding the truth. “It is impossible for us not to

speak about what we have seen and heard." (Acts 4:20). For everybody needs the Savior. And when they do not go to Him it may just be they do not recognize Him because we did not know how to announce Him. The real fact is, however, that as soon as they recognized Him "they laid the sick in the marketplaces and begged him that they might touch only the tassel on his cloak; and as many as touched it were healed." (Mk 6:56). And Jesus cured mostly those who were "placed" close to Him; those who were more in urgent need of remedy.