

Saturday of the Fifth Week in Ordinary Time

Gospel text (Mk 8:1-10): In those days when there again was a great crowd without anything to eat, Jesus summoned the disciples and said, “My heart is moved with pity for the crowd, because they have been with me now for three days and have nothing to eat. If I send them away hungry to their homes, they will collapse on the way, and some of them have come a great distance.” His disciples answered him, “Where can anyone get enough bread to satisfy them here in this deserted place?” Still he asked them, “How many loaves do you have?” “Seven,” they replied.

He ordered the crowd to sit down on the ground. Then, taking the seven loaves he gave thanks, broke them, and gave them to his disciples to distribute, and they distributed them to the crowd. They also had a few fish. He said the blessing over them and ordered them distributed also. They ate and were satisfied. They picked up the fragments left over—seven baskets. There were about four thousand people. He dismissed them and got into the boat with his disciples and came to the region of Dalmanutha.

“They have nothing to eat”

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Today in a time of inclemency and unrest, Jesus also calls us to tell us that his “heart is moved with pity for the crowd” (Mk 8:2). Today, with peace in crisis, fear, apathy, recourse to banality and evasion can abound: “They have nothing to eat.”

Who does the Lord call? The text says: “His disciples” (Mk 8:1), that is, he calls me, so as not to send them away hungry, but to give them something. Jesus has taken pity — this time in the land of pagans — because they are also hungry.

Ah! And we — refugees in our little world — say that we can do nothing. “Where can anyone get enough bread to satisfy them here in this deserted place?” (Mk 8:4). Where will we get a word of sure and firm hope, knowing that the Lord will be with us every day until the end of time? How can we tell believers and unbelievers that violence and death are not a solution?

Today, the Lord simply asks us how many loaves of bread we have. He needs however many we have. The text says “seven,” a symbol for pagans, just as twelve was a symbol for the Jewish people. The Lord wants to reach out to everyone—that is why the Church wants to recognize itself as Catholic—and asks for your help. Give him your prayer: it is a loaf of bread! Give him your lived Eucharist: it is another loaf of bread! Give him your decision for reconciliation with your loved ones, with those who have offended you: it is another loaf of bread! Give him your sacramental reconciliation with the Church: it is another loaf of bread! Give him your small sacrifice, your fasting, your solidarity: it is another loaf of bread! Give him your love for his Word, which gives you comfort and strength: it is another loaf of bread! Give him, in short, whatever he asks of you, even if you think it is only a little bread.

As St. Gregory of Nyssa tells us, “He who shares his bread with the poor becomes part of him who, for our sake, wanted to be poor. The Lord was poor, do not fear poverty.”

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “For our Lord’s breaking the bread means the opening of mysteries. His giving of thanks shows how great a joy He feels in the salvation of the human race. His giving the loaves to His disciples that they might set them before the people, signifies that He assigns to the Apostles His will that by their ministry the food of life should be distributed to the Church.” (Saint Bede the Venerable)
- “This miracle was not intended merely to satisfy hunger for a day, but rather it signals what Christ wants to accomplish for the salvation of all mankind, giving his own flesh and blood.” (Francis)
- “The Breaking of Bread, because Jesus used this rite, part of a Jewish meal when as master of the table he blessed and distributed the bread (...). It is by this action that his disciples will recognize him after his Resurrection, and it is this expression that the first Christians will use to designate their Eucharistic assemblies (...).” (Catechism Of The Catholic Church, № 1329)