

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”

Fr. Carles ELÍAS i Cao
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Today, in our times of inclemency and anxiety, Jesus also calls us to tell us He feels “pity for the crowd” (Mk 8:2). Today, with the peace process in crisis, fear, apathy, banality and evasion may abound: “and (they) have nothing to eat.”

To whom is the Lord calling? The text says: “he summoned the disciples” (Mk 8:1), that is, He calls me, not to send them home hungry, to give them something to eat. Jesus sympathizes with them —this time in heathen land— because they are hungry.

But, alas! Sheltered in our little world, we say we can do nothing about it. “Where can anyone get enough bread to satisfy them here in this deserted place?” (Mk 8:4). Where shall we find a true and firm word of hope while knowing the Lord will be with us every day till the end of time? How can we tell the believers and the non-believers that violence and death are no solution?

Today, the Lord simply asks us how many loaves we have. Whatever we have, this is what He needs. The text says “seven”, a symbol for the heathen, just as twelve was a symbol for the Jewish people. The Lord wants to reach us all —this is why the Church, from its Catholicism, wants to recognize itself— and is asking for your help. Give Him your prayer: it is a loaf of bread! Give Him the Eucharist you have celebrated: it is another loaf of bread! Give Him your decision to reconcile with those you love, with those that have offended you: still another loaf of bread! Give Him your sacramental reconciliation with the Church: another loaf! Give Him your little sacrifice, your fasting, your solidarity: and still another loaf! Give Him your love for His Word that soothes and gives you strength: more bread! Anyway, give Him whatever He asks from you, though you may believe it is not worthwhile.

As Saint Gregory of Nyssa says: “He who splits his bread with the poor becomes a part of He who, for us, wanted to be poor. The Lord was poor; do not be afraid of poverty.”

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

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“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)

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“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)

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“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, N° 1329)