Monday of the Sixth Week in Ordinary Time

Gospel text (*Mk* 8:11-13): The Pharisees came forward and began to argue with him, seeking from him a sign from heaven to test him. He sighed from the depth of his spirit and said, “Why does this generation seek a sign? Amen, I say to you, no sign will be given to this generation.” Then he left them, got into the boat again, and went off to the other shore.

“Amen, I say to you, no sign will be given”

Fr. Jordi POU i Sabater
(Sant Jordi Desvalls, Girona, Spain)

Today the Gospel does not seem to tell us much about Jesus or about ourselves. “Why does this generation seek a sign?” (Mk 8:12). Saint John Paul II, commenting on this episode in the life of Jesus Christ, says: “Jesus invites us to discern the words and deeds which bear witness to (are a “sign of”) the imminent coming of the Father’s kingdom.” It seems that the Jews who question Jesus lack the ability or the will to discern that sign which is in fact all the actions, deeds and words of the Lord.

Even today, we ask Jesus for signs: to make his presence known in the world or to tell us in an obvious way how we should act. The Pope makes us see that Jesus Christ’s refusal to give a sign to the Jews – and therefore to us too – is due to his wanting to “overturn the worldly logic aimed at seeking signs that would confirm the human desire for self-affirmation and power.” The Jews did not want just any sign, but one that would indicate that Jesus was the kind of Messiah they were waiting for. They were not waiting for the one who came to save them, but the one who came to reassure their vision of how things should be done.

In short, when the Jews of Jesus's time, as well as Christians today, ask for a sign—in one way or another—what we do is ask God to act in our way, the way we believe to be most correct, and which in fact supports our way of thinking. And God, who knows and can do more (and that is why we ask in the Lord's Prayer that "his" will be done), has His ways, even if it is not easy for us to understand them. But He, who allows himself to be found by all who seek Him, will also, if we ask for discernment, make us understand how He works and how we can distinguish His signs today.

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “There are three ways for wisdom or prudence to abound in you: if you confess your sins, if you give thanks and praise, and if your speech is edifying.” (Saint Bernard)

- “‘If you are God's Son…’. He is ‘tested’ just as products are tested. The arrogance that would make God an object and impose our laboratory conditions upon him is incapable of finding Him.” (Benedict XVI)

- “The signs worked by Jesus attest that the Father has sent him. They invite belief in him (…). Despite his evident miracles some people reject Jesus; he is even accused of acting by the power of demons.” (Catechism Of The Catholic Church, Nº 548)