Wednesday of the First Week of Advent

Gospel text (*Mt* 15:29-37): Moving on from there Jesus walked by the Sea of Galilee, went up on the mountain, and sat down there. Great crowds came to him, having with them the lame, the blind, the deformed, the mute, and many others. They placed them at his feet, and he cured them. The crowds were amazed when they saw the mute speaking, the deformed made whole, the lame walking, and the blind able to see, and they glorified the God of Israel.

Jesus summoned his disciples and said, “My heart is moved with pity for the crowd, for they have been with me now for three days and have nothing to eat. I do not want to send them away hungry, for fear they may collapse on the way.” The disciples said to him, “Where could we ever get enough bread in this deserted place to satisfy such a crowd?” Jesus said to them, “How many loaves do you have?” “Seven,” they replied, “and a few fish.” He ordered the crowd to sit down on the ground. Then he took the seven loaves and the fish, gave thanks, broke the loaves, and gave them to the disciples, who in turn gave them to the crowds.

They all ate and were satisfied. They picked up the fragments left over—seven baskets full.

“How many loaves do you have?” “Seven,” they replied, “and a few fish.”

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Today we reflect on the multiplication of the bread and fish in the Gospel. Many people —Matthew states— “came to him” (Mt 15:30). Men and women who were in need of Christ: blind people, cripples and sick people of every kind, together with those who accompanied them. We are all in need of Christ. Of his tenderness, his forgiveness, his light, his mercy... In him, the fullness of all that is human can be found.

Today's Gospel makes us aware of the need for men who will lead others to Christ. Those who bring Jesus the sick so that he can cure them are the image of all those who know that the greatest act of charity towards their fellow man is to get them close to Christ, the source of our life. A life of faith demands holiness and apostolate.

Saint Paul urges us (Phil 2:5) to have the same feelings as Christ. This story shows what Jesus' heart is like: “My heart is moved with pity for the crowd”. He cannot leave them, because they are hungry and tired. Christ searches man out in his necessity and manages to be there for us to find. How good He is to us! And how important we people are for Him! Our hearts swell with gratitude, admiration and a sincere wish for conversion.

This God made man, all-powerful, who loves us passionately, and whom we need in everything and for everything —“because without me you can do nothing” (Jn 15:5)— paradoxically requires something from us as well: this is the meaning of the seven loaves of bread and the few fish that he will use to feed a crowd. If we really realized how much Jesus counts on us, and of the value of all we do for Him, as small as it is, we would try all the harder to correspond to Him with all our being.

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “Sick, our nature demanded to be healed; fallen, to be raised up; dead, to rise again. We had lost the possession of the good; it was necessary for it to be given back to us. Closed in the darkness, it was necessary to bring us the light.” (St. Gregory of Nyssa)

- “Mercy is love’s second name.” (Pope Francis)

- “Christ's compassion (...) toward all who suffer goes so far that he identifies himself with them: `I was sick and you visited me’ (Mt 25:36). His preferential love for the sick has not ceased through the centuries to draw the very special attention of Christians toward all those who suffer in body and soul. It is the source of tireless efforts to comfort them.” (Catechism Of The Catholic Church, Nº 1.503)