

Tuesday after Epiphany

Gospel text (Mk 6:34-44): When Jesus saw the vast crowd, his heart was moved with pity for them, for they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things. By now it was already late and his disciples approached him and said, “This is a deserted place and it is already very late. Dismiss them so that they can go to the surrounding farms and villages and buy themselves something to eat.” He said to them in reply, “Give them some food yourselves.” But they said to him, “Are we to buy two hundred days’ wages worth of food and give it to them to eat?” He asked them, “How many loaves do you have? Go and see.” And when they had found out they said, “Five loaves and two fish.”

So he gave orders to have them sit down in groups on the green grass. The people took their places in rows by hundreds and by fifties. Then, taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he said the blessing, broke the loaves, and gave them to his disciples to set before the people; he also divided the two fish among them all. They all ate and were satisfied. And they picked up twelve wicker baskets full of fragments and what was left of the fish. Those who ate of the loaves were five thousand men.

“They were like sheep without a shepherd”

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Today, Jesus shows Himself to be sensitive to the needs of people who are in search of Him. He just cannot remain indifferent to the needs of those he meets on the way. He feels compassion when He sees the great crowd that has been following Him “like sheep without a shepherd” (Mk 6:34). The Master leaves His immediate plans aside and starts preaching. How many times have we allowed urgency or impatience manage our behavior? How many times have we not wanted to change our plans in order to help with immediate and unforeseen needs? Jesus gives us an example of flexibility, of the ability to modify plans and be available for the people who follow Him.

Time goes by quickly. When you love, it is easy for time to go by very quickly. And Jesus, who loves much, preaches at length. The disciples remind the Master that it is getting late. What worries them is how the crowd is going to feed itself. Then Jesus makes an implausible proposal: “Give them some food yourselves.” (Mk 6:37). He is not only worried about spiritual bread but also about bodily food. The disciples find it difficult, very difficult. And it is true! the cost would be “two hundred days’ wages worth of food” (Mk 6:37). They see the material difficulties, but their eyes do not still recognize that He who speaks to them is almighty; they need more faith.

Jesus does not make them stand in line, he organizes them in groups. They rest and share together as a community. He asked the disciples for the food they had: only five loaves and two fish. Jesus takes them, invokes God's blessing and distributes them. Such a small amount of food will feed thousands of people with twelve baskets in excess. This miracle introduces the spiritual bread of the Eucharist. The Bread of life that spreads freely to all the people of the Earth in order to give life and eternal life.

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “We beg you, Lord, to help and defend us. May every nation come to know that you alone are God, that Jesus is your

Child, that we are your people, the sheep that you pasture.” (Saint Clement of Rome)

- “Only God’s mercy can free humanity from the many forms of evil, at times monstrous evil, which selfishness spawns in our midst. He brings hope. Where God is born, peace is born. And where peace is born, there is no longer room for hatred and for war.” (Francis)
- “Christ's compassion toward the sick and his many healings of every kind of infirmity are a resplendent sign that ‘God has visited his people’ (Lk 7:16) and that the Kingdom of God is close at hand.” (Catechism Of The Catholic Church, N^o 1503)