Wednesday after Epiphany

Gospel text (*Mk* 6:45-52): After the five thousand had eaten and were satisfied, Jesus made his disciples get into the boat and precede him to the other side toward Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd. And when he had taken leave of them, he went off to the mountain to pray. When it was evening, the boat was far out on the sea and he was alone on shore.

Then he saw that they were tossed about while rowing, for the wind was against them. About the fourth watch of the night, he came toward them walking on the sea. He meant to pass by them. But when they saw him walking on the sea, they thought it was a ghost and cried out. They had all seen him and were terrified. But at once he spoke with them, "Take courage, it is I, do not be afraid!" He got into the boat with them and the wind died down. They were completely astounded. They had not understood the incident of the loaves. On the contrary, their hearts were hardened.

"And when he had taken leave of them, he went off to the mountain to pray"

Fr. Melcior QUEROL i Solà
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Today, we see how Jesus, after dismissing the apostles and the crowd, goes off by himself to pray. His whole life has been a constant dialogue with the Father, and yet, he chooses to go to the hillside to pray. And what about us? How do we pray? More often than not the frantic pace of our worldly life becomes a serious obstacle for our spiritual life. And we forget that it is as equally important to "feed" our soul, as it is to feed our body. However, God and our relationship with Him do not stand high in our priorities. Under such circumstances it is difficult to truly pray. Nor is it possible to maintain a prayerful spirit when we beg for help only in times of trouble.

Finding room and time for prayer requires a yearning within us to meet God with the unshakable conviction that nobody and nothing can replace him. Without this longing to communicate with God, our prayer easily drifts into a soliloquy, a tool we use just to try to solve nagging problems. We are also easily distracted during prayer, our hearts and minds invaded by all kind of thoughts and feelings. Praying is not like chatting but rather a simple elated encounter with Love. It is our ongoing relationship with God: the silent communication between me, the poor one who needs everything, and "You", the transcendent

provider of all. The constant reward of true prayer lies in our sure knowledge that our Creator loves us.

Prayer and Christian life are inseparable. Origen of Alexandria, the ancient Church Father reminds us that: “Only he who joins prayer to deeds and deeds to prayer, prays unceasingly. Only in this way can we understand what it means to pray constantly”. We must indeed pray without stop to sanctify our deeds and join them to our prayer. The continuous dialogue Jesus offers us in prayer not only soothes our spirit but brings us to realize that prayer is the breath of God’s love. If we do not breathe we die; if we do not pray, we die spiritually.

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “Mistrust God, will I not, though I feel me faint, and though I should feel my fear even at point to overthrow me too, yet shall I remember how Saint Peter, with a blast of wind, began to sink for his faint faith, and shall do as he did, call upon Christ and pray him to help.” (Saint Thomas More)

- “[Nowadays] God is “allowed” to act in ideas and thoughts, in the spiritual domain, but not in the material. That is shocking. If God does not also have power over matter, then he simply is not God.” (Benedict XVI)

- “Nothing exists that does not owe its existence to God the Creator. The world began when God's word drew it out of nothingness; all existent beings, all of nature, and all human history are rooted in this primordial event, the very genesis by which the world was constituted and time begun.” (Catechism Of The Catholic Church, № 338)