

GOSPEL

JOHN 6:24-35

When the people saw that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they got into boats and crossed to Capernaum to look for Jesus. When they found him on the other side, they said to him, ‘Rabbi, when did you come here?’ Jesus answered:

‘I tell you most solemnly, you are not looking for me because you have seen the signs

but because you had all the bread you wanted to eat. Do not work for food that cannot last, but work for food that endures to eternal life, the kind of food the Son of Man is offering you, for on him the Father, God himself, has set his seal.’

Then they said to him, ‘What must we do if we are to do the works that God wants?’ Jesus gave them this answer, ‘This is working for God: you must believe in the one he has sent.’ So they said, ‘What sign will you give to show us that we should believe in you? What work will you do? Our fathers had manna to eat in the desert; as scripture says: He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’

Jesus answered: ‘I tell you most solemnly, it was not Moses who gave you bread from heaven, it is my Father who gives you the bread from heaven, the true bread; for the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.’ ‘Sir,’ they said ‘give us that bread always.’ Jesus answered: ‘I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never be hungry; he who believes in me will never thirst.’

A REFLECTION BY POPE FRANCIS

Over the last few Sundays the liturgy has presented us with the image filled with Jesus’ tenderness reaching out to the crowd and its needs. In today’s Gospel passage the perspective changes. The crowd whose hunger Jesus has satisfied begins to seek him anew and goes to encounter him. But for Jesus, it is not enough that people seek him. He wants people to know him. He wishes that

the search for him and the encounter with him go beyond the immediate satisfaction of material needs. Jesus came to bring us something more, to open our lives to a wider horizon than the daily concerns of eating, clothing ourselves, career and so on. Thus, turning to the crowd, he exclaims: “you seek me, not because you saw signs but because you ate your fill of the loaves”. In this way, he encourages the people to go a step further and to question themselves on the significance of the miracle, and not simply to take advantage of it. Indeed, the multiplication of the loaves and the fish is a sign of the great gift the Father has given to humanity, which is Jesus himself!

He, the true “bread of life”, wants to satisfy not just the bodies but also the souls, giving the spiritual food that can satisfy profound hunger. This is why he invites the crowd to obtain not the food which perishes, but that which endures for eternal life. It is the food that Jesus gives to us every day: his Word, his Body, his Blood. The crowd listens to the Lord’s invitation, but does not understand its meaning — as often happens to us — and asks him: “What must we do, to be doing the works of God?”. Those who are listening to Jesus think that he is asking them to observe the precepts in order to obtain more miracles like the multiplication of the loaves. This is a common temptation; to reduce religion to only the practice of its laws, projecting onto our relationship with God the image of the relationship between servants and their master: servants must carry out the tasks that the master assigns to them in order to enjoy his benevolence. We all know this. Therefore, the crowd wants to know from Jesus which actions it must perform in order to please God. But Jesus’ reply is unexpected: “This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent”. Today, these words are also addressed to us: God’s work does not consist so much in “doing” things, but in “believing” in Him whom He sent. This means that faith in Jesus allows us to carry out God’s works. If we allow ourselves to be involved in

this loving and trusting relationship with Jesus, we will be able to perform good works that exude the fragrance of the Gospel for the good and needs of our brothers and sisters.

The Lord invites us not to forget that, if it is necessary to worry about bread, it is even more important to nurture our relationship with Him, to strengthen our faith in Him, who is the “bread of life” who came to satisfy our hunger for truth, our hunger for justice and our hunger for love. May the Virgin Mary, support us in our journey of faith and help us to joyfully surrender ourselves to God’s design for our lives.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- What’s one line from the Gospel that stood out to you? Why?
- It has been said that people are born with a Jesus-shaped hole in their life. What does this mean to you? What would it look like for Jesus to fill this void in our lives?
- One way to approach Jesus is by adoring him in the Blessed Sacrament, the Eucharist. Have you spent much time in adoration? What was that experience like for you?

PRAYER

Spend some time in prayer with one another

1. Conscious of what has just been shared, members briefly name/ describe their prayer needs.
2. Intentionally call on the Holy Spirit to be present (e.g. “Come Holy Spirit, please be present as we pray”)
3. Move to prayers of thanks and praise to God.
4. Pray for each others’ prayer needs. Where appropriate, you may like to encourage the group to place a hand on the shoulder of the individual that you are currently praying for.
5. Conclude your prayer time with another prayer of praise, perhaps reciting the ‘Glory Be’ or similar prayer.