

8. February 2020

“Flock without a shepherd”

Mk 6,30-34

At that time the apostles whom Jesus had sent out gathered together again with him and reported all that they had done and taught. Then he said to them: "Come with me to a lonely place where we can be alone and rest for a while. For they did not even find time to eat, so numerous were the people who came and went. So they took the boat to a lonely place to be alone. But they were seen departing, and many learned of it; they walked there on foot from every town, and arrived before them. When he got out and saw the many people, he had pity on them, for they were like sheep without a shepherd. And he taught them for a long time.

Twice in this text we can look a little into the heart of our Lord! In the first case we learn something about the intimate relationship between Jesus and His disciples. They were obviously exhausted by the mission: the many people, no time to eat and completely absorbed by their ministry!

Whoever has once dealt with many people and also served a mission can understand how exhausted the disciples must have been, for attending to many people who need help requires all your energy. One is constantly in service, and all inner strength is required.

In that situation were the disciples! The Lord saw this and he wanted to give them rest, in which they could renew their natural and spiritual forces and be alone with him!

We can see how sensitively the Lord deals with his disciples here, knowing very well what they need now! It is a look of love and deep understanding.

But it came differently! The crowds were looking for Jesus and arrived at the place of solitude even before Jesus and his disciples!

Now, the second look that this Gospel allows us to throw on the Lord's heart is when it says that he saw the need of the people, who were like sheep without a shepherd. Indeed, the comparison used here would be a serious situation for the

sheep: a flock without a guide is defenceless against the coming of the wolf! And in this case, what counts for animals applies to people as well.

Man is dependent on true leadership! The people who sought Jesus probably felt that the religious leaders of the time could not really be shepherds to them. As Scripture denounces, they often grazed themselves (*cf. Ezek 34,2*) ... This is a deplorable state, which can lead people into great inner distress.

Let us remember how the People of Israel lamented when there were no prophets or someone to guide them (*cf. Dan 3,38*).

Jesus sees this need.

He is the Good Shepherd who gives His life for His sheep. That is why He takes care of them independently of His own tiredness and exhaustion. People need Him, they need guidance, they need redemption, they need His love and closeness!

This has not changed in our time, even if people seem self-confident or emancipated! But how much confusion there is in today's society! People run after false ideologies and not seldom after money; they pursue erroneous illusions about happiness... they have no shepherds to guide them and often do not know to whom they belong!

Unfortunately, a great confusion has also broken out in the Church and we find few shepherds who oppose the confusion and give clear instructions.

In yesterday's meditation, I had mentioned the erroneous synodal way that the Church in Germany wants to take. It is willing to make decisions that could be in contradiction to the Magisterium of the Catholic Church. There was a handful of bishops who raised their voices to show their disagreement; but all the others, it seems, voted in favour of this unspeakable decision.

So where will the Catholic faithful in Germany go now; those who do not want to go astray? And what will the priests who recognize that it is a wrong way do? One can hardly expect a clear correction from Rome!

It is all the more important to seek Jesus, to tell Him that we need Him and to listen to His voice, in the midst of the multitude of voices. He has spoken His word, He has left us the Church with a clear Magisterium; and if we listen to His word and to her authentic voice, then we have orientation!

Perhaps Jesus' disciples today too need to retire with him, to rest with Him in a place where silence reigns. But, like the disciples of that time, we will also have to turn our eyes to the need of this time, to the disorientation of many people... The misery of men touched the heart of Jesus, and so it should also touch the heart of the disciples.

Today's Gospel ends by saying: „...*and Jesus taught them for a long time.*“

Mental and spiritual need lies even deeper than the material need of human beings; the liberation from sin and confusion weighs more heavily than anything else. Men are in need of a clear announcement of the Gospel and a good example. They must know what grace and sin are, what brings them closer to God and what makes them move away from Him!

And Jesus taught them for a long time. Their souls were dried up and his word gave them strength and nourishment.

Let us also be ready to give testimony, letting ourselves be touched by the love of Jesus and looking with compassion on those who have no shepherd and do not yet know him!