

8. August 2021

## “The Father Draws Men”

*Jn 6:41-51*

*Meanwhile the Jews were complaining to each other about him, because he had said, 'I am the bread that has come down from heaven.' They were saying, 'Surely this is Jesus son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know. How can he now say, "I have come down from heaven?" ' Jesus said in reply to them, 'Stop complaining to each other. 'No one can come to me unless drawn by the Father who sent me, and I will raise that person up on the last day. It is written in the prophets: They will all be taught by God; everyone who has listened to the Father, and learnt from him, comes to me. Not that anybody has seen the Father, except him who has his being from God: he has seen the Father. In all truth I tell you, everyone who believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate manna in the desert and they are dead; but this is the bread which comes down from heaven, so that a person may eat it and not die. I am the living bread which has come down from heaven. Anyone who eats this bread will live for ever; and the bread that I shall give is my flesh, for the life of the world.'*

No one can recognise the Lord and call Jesus "my Lord" unless he is moved by the Holy Spirit (cf. 1 Cor 12:3); or, as today's text says, no one can come to Him unless he is drawn by the Father.

Faith is therefore, in the first instance, a work of God, which requires us to accept it and to put it into practice on a daily basis. The offer of faith exists for every person, excluding no one. This makes the call to evangelisation all the more urgent, so that all people may learn what God intends for them.

In today's Gospel, Jesus continues to teach the Jews, so that they can better understand Him and the Father.

The bread that the Israelites had received during their wilderness wanderings, and which became for them the great sign of God's presence, handed down from generation to generation, is now made present in Jesus. It is no longer only a sign that testifies to the presence of God; the very one who worked this sign makes

Himself present. It is no longer only the material bread, necessary to preserve natural life; it is the One who is life itself.

The Jews were invited to grow in the knowledge of God, to recognise His presence in the Person of Jesus and thus to gain a great light to understand more deeply their whole history with God, oriented towards the Coming of the Lord and His presence in their midst.

The experiences of the Old Covenant were a trajectory and a preparation for the Coming of the Messiah: *"Your fathers ate manna in the desert and they are dead; but this is the bread which comes down from heaven, so that a person may eat it and not die."*

We know that the Jews often found it difficult to understand these words of the Lord, perhaps also because some of them tried to embrace them in their human way of thinking. The same can happen to us!

However, it is more a question of the light of faith penetrating us, and not so much of being able to grasp it immediately with our understanding. For faith is a supernatural light, which must first expand within us, and only then will we be able to understand it better with our reason, which is only a natural light and therefore limited.

So, in order for this light to work in us, it requires more of an open heart than of the intellect. Therefore, when we are confronted with the mysteries of faith or questions related to it, we should not try to understand everything immediately with our reason, but first listen.

In today's Gospel, the Lord quotes a scripture from the prophets, which says: *"They will all be taught by God"*. If we apply this statement concretely, we will listen to God as our Teacher, so that what He wants to tell us can penetrate us, gladden our heart and enlighten our understanding.

Perhaps this is also the deepest problem, because of which the Lord was not received in the way that would have corresponded to truth and love. Often Jesus was confronted with hardened hearts, hearts that were unwilling to allow themselves to be instructed. Also in the Old Covenant we hear about this suffering of God. How often we hear the complaint that the people do not listen, that their hearts are closed, that they stubbornly rebel, that they are too proud to

understand God's humble ways (cf. Ps 95:8-10)! This is the situation when the Lord is at the door of our heart and knocks, but we do not open it.

Besides the fact that we should always examine before God the state of our own heart, so that it will never be closed to His guidance, we cannot forget to pray for those people who are to be touched by the Gospel, so that they may perceive how the Father draws them and open the door of their heart to Him. God wants nothing less than to give Himself... And that is enough!