

11. February 2023

## The miracles of God

Mk 8:1-10

*And now once again a great crowd had gathered, and they had nothing to eat. So he called his disciples to him and said to them, 'I feel sorry for all these people; they have been with me for three days now and have nothing to eat. If I send them off home hungry they will collapse on the way; some have come a great distance.' His disciples replied, 'Where could anyone get these people enough bread to eat in a deserted place?' He asked them, 'How many loaves have you?' And they said to him, 'Seven.' Then he instructed the crowd to sit down on the ground, and he took the seven loaves, and after giving thanks he broke them and began handing them to his disciples to distribute; and they distributed them among the crowd. They had a few small fishes as well, and over these he said a blessing and ordered them to be distributed too. They ate as much as they wanted, and they collected seven basketfuls of the scraps left over. Now there had been about four thousand people. He sent them away and at once, getting into the boat with his disciples, went to the region of Dalmanutha.*

The Lord's concern for humankind is complete and encompasses all their needs. After having instructed them for three days and having certainly performed many healings, He worked a miracle to satisfy their hunger. Miracles are intended to manifest the glory of God, apart from the concrete help they give in every situation. Miracles can facilitate the conversion of people, as has happened throughout the history of the Church, and continues to happen in our time.

Today we celebrate the memory of Our Lady of Lourdes, an apparition which was also a miracle of God. To this day miraculous healings continue to take place at the site of the apparition. Because in our time great value is placed on science, all cases of extraordinary healings at Lourdes are subjected to thorough investigation. Once it is established that there is no biological explanation for the phenomenon, it is referred to as a miracle.

However, there is no guarantee that a miracle - however obvious and "proven" - will automatically lead people to believe in God. Certainly in France there are hardly any people who have not heard of Lourdes and the "scientifically proven" miracles that occur there. However, precisely in France there is a lot of disbelief and hostility towards the Church. One would think that it would be so easy for any Frenchman to travel to Lourdes or to read serious reports about these events, and then to find faith by seeing such miracles. But unfortunately this is not the case. Then the big question arises: Why don't they believe?

Miracles that are physically evident may arouse great astonishment and shock, but they do not necessarily penetrate the heart. Something similar happens with the Word of God: although it is objectively the truth, not every person is touched by it and changes his or her life. If it were that simple, the world would not be as it is.

It all depends on the disposition of the person, on whether he allows himself to be touched by God and everything he sees, so that he changes his life and opens his heart to the Lord. Miracles such as the one in today's Gospel or those at Lourdes bear witness to the goodness and tenderness of God, who invites us again and again to conversion and to a deeper trust in Him.

But there are also signs and miracles that God performs to urge people to turn away from their evil ways and turn to Him. Chapter 16 of Revelation describes plagues that fall upon mankind, showing people the need for conversion under dramatic and stormy circumstances:

*"The fourth angel emptied his bowl over the sun and it was made to scorch people with its flames; but though people were scorched by the fierce heat of it, they cursed the name of God who had the power to cause such plagues, and they would not repent and glorify him."* (Rev 16:8-9).

We always come back to the question of the human heart, for it depends on it whether it is open or closed to God's action; it depends on it whether we rejoice in God's wonders and heed His warnings, or whether, on the contrary, we pursue our course with indifference. That is why it is so important that we walk our way with great vigilance and that we open our hearts more and more to God.

As we come to the end of this meditation, I would like to tell you about a miracle we experienced in the Agnus Dei community. On a day like today, February 11, 1985, the feast of Our Lady of Lourdes, we started Perpetual Adoration in our monastery in Germany as a small community. This means that at every moment, day and night, one of us is praying in front of the Blessed Sacrament. Even though some members of the community have passed away and we are now very few in number, this constant prayer is still maintained. This miracle, though different from those at Lourdes or those related in Holy Scripture, inspires in us a deep gratitude to God.

God alone knows what Perpetual Adoration means for His Kingdom of God! Therefore, my gratitude goes first of all to God, who gives us the grace to carry it out; as well as to all those who, with great fidelity, serve this mission.