

April 24th, 2023

Monday of the Third Week of Easter

Work for the food that endures

Jn 6:22-29

*After Jesus fed some five thousand men, his disciples saw Him walking over the water. The next day, the crowd that had stayed on the other side saw that only one boat had been there, and that Jesus had not got into the boat with his disciples, but that the disciples had set off by themselves. Other boats, however, had put in from Tiberias, near the place where the bread had been eaten. When the people saw that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they got into those 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: In all truth I tell you, you are looking for me not because you have seen the signs but because you had all the bread you wanted to eat. Do not work for food that goes bad, but work for food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of man will give 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 carry out God's work?' Jesus gave them this answer, 'This is carrying out God's work: you must believe in the one he has sent.'*

Jesus knows the real reason that moves the people to search for Him in today's gospel. They haven't grasped the essential dimension of the miracle of the multiplication of loaves, instead, they only stayed with the additional gift they received, that is to say, the satiation of their body.

However, the multiplication of the loaves should be for them a sign of God's presence and a remembrance of the story that certainly all of them knew about, when God had conducted His people through the desert and fed them with the bread from heaven. Now, that same God stood among them and made the same signs, to reveal it was actually Him. They should search for Jesus, not because of what He could give them, but instead, to know Him better and recognize He is the same God of their fathers.

To us, the Christians, the same can happen. Sometimes we do not comprehend what Jesus is really trying to tell us, and we cling to the extraordinary phenomena, considering

it as the essential part. For example, the miraculous healing of a disease is, without a doubt, a powerful intervention of God in the context of suffering, which carries us to praise His boundless goodness. Nevertheless, healing is nothing more than one of the manifestations of His constant love for us, testifying in this case the healing dimension of His love. A miracle like this should carry us to recognize that His love is around us all the time and is with us in every circumstance. If we understand this, our eyes are open to discovering the reality of God and our heart becomes calm and serene in Him.

Jesus knows our motivations, even if we ourselves are not always aware of them. This is why we can ask Him to purify our motivations with regard to Him and to our fellow humans in a way to put our focus on what is essential, without letting us be carried too much by the so-called 'coexistences'. With this last term, I'm making reference to the fact that, on top of our conscious intention, there could also be other indirect and inconscient intentions, that look to satisfy our own interests.

Jesus invites us to strive for the food that endures for eternal life. This invitation comes in hand with another phrase pronounced by the Lord: "*Search first for the Kingdom of God and his justice, and everything else will come in addition*" (Mt 6:33). Our true focus is on discovering and accomplishing the Will of God. This is our own input for our salvation and of others: That the Will of God can be accomplished in our life. If we sincerely strive to follow the road that has been traced for us, then we have recognized what is essential and we try to accomplish it. There's nothing greater than this!

In the words of today's Gospel, the Lord puts us in front of a mirror to get to know ourselves. Is our attention too focused on earthly matters? Are we capable of doing great efforts when it's about the things of this world but we neglect our religious obligations? How big is our zeal for the Kingdom of God? Do we dedicate enough time to the Lord?

At the end of the Gospel, Jesus leaves us those marvelous words, telling us what consists of the work of God: "*This is carrying out God's work: you must believe in the one he has sent*".

This affirmation tells everything and also answers the questions about why we exist in this world and what is our task here.

If we seriously follow the Lord in faith, the Will of God can unfold in our lives, and everything else derives from this “work of God”. And it’s worth emphasizing that it is a “work of God” because, in effect, faith is a supernatural virtue, to which we give our response when embracing it. And it is precisely in this response we show God our love; in this response, we overcome the world (1 Jn 5:4); in this response, we start to see life in the light of God and to recognize the marvels of His love. With faith, it is revealed to us the purpose of our existence: to praise God and serve Him.