

15. April 2024

The precious teachings of Jesus

Jn 6:22-29

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.'

All our attention should be focused on the Kingdom of God. This is an admonition that the Lord repeatedly puts before our eyes, but which is often not properly heard and implemented. We humans are so quick to lose ourselves in earthly things and neglect the pursuit of the Kingdom of God.

Jesus knows the people who are looking for Him in today's Gospel and knows their motivation. It is not the signs He did, but the fact that they were fed at the feeding of the five thousand (cf. Jn 6:5-13). He does not hide this from them, but takes this as an occasion to teach them a lesson. What a grace it is to be instructed by Him and to be offered the possibility of perceiving one's own blindness! People would not have noticed it on their own. "Who can detect his own failings?" (Ps 19:13) who is ready in the light of God to examine his deepest motivations and then to correct them accordingly in the direction that the Master teaches us?

But this is what makes the spiritual path fruitful! Without following these spiritual teachings of the Lord, we make no progress.

Let us listen carefully to the Lord: *“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”*.

This is certainly applicable to the concrete situation first. People are to make the effort to seek Jesus so that they may hear His word and receive what He has to give them. This is the food that abides for eternal life. *“Sky and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away”* (Lk 21:33) and, *“As grass withers, the flower fades, but the Word of the Lord remains for ever”* (1 Pet 1:24b-25a) It is for this food that people should seek and make every effort to receive this gift from the Lord. Nothing is more important! The feeding of the five thousand was an additional gift of God's goodness, which He always gladly gives to please His children.

From here we can leave the concrete situation and know that it is not only about the above situation, but the Lord calls this to all people at all times. At the same time, with His words, He hands us a means of self-knowledge. We should look at what moves and drives us in the depths, so that we do not blindly give our attention and effort to those things which pass away, which occupy a wrong place in our lives, which are not worth it at all and even threaten to block the way to true life.

Let us also remember the wonderful lesson the Lord gave to St Martha:

“In the course of their journey he came to a village, and a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house. She had a sister called Mary, who sat down at the Lord's feet and listened to him speaking. Now Martha, who was distracted with all the serving, came to him and said, 'Lord, do you not care that my sister is leaving me to do the serving all by myself? Please tell her to help me.' But the Lord answered, 'Martha, Martha,' he said, 'you worry and fret about so many things, and yet few are needed, indeed only one. It is Mary who has chosen the better part, and it is not to be taken from her'” (Lk 10:38-42).

Most certainly the Lord loved Martha and saw that she wanted to show her love to Him by her service. But Martha did not understand what is most important, which is to listen to Him. It is He who speaks the words of eternal life (cf. Jn 6:68)!

Thus the Lord calls out to the “Marthas” of this world and points them to the right path. It is not the abundance of worries and troubles about the physical well-being of the Lord that is appropriate when He is present or when He is spoken of, but listening to His words.

At the end of the text, the Lord again gives us an inscrutable instruction:

"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'".

The Lord's answer is not: You must do this and that to please God. No, if we believe in Jesus whom the Father has sent, the work of God happens. Everything else follows from that. That is what pleases God, because when He dwells in the soul of man through faith, God can do His work. *"Everything is possible for one who has faith"* (Mk 9:24).