

24. January 2025

THE GOSPEL OF ST. JOHN
“The work of God”

Jn 6:22-29

On the next day the people who remained on the other side of the sea saw that there had been only one boat there, and that Jesus had not entered the boat with his disciples, but that his disciples had gone away alone. However, boats from Tibe'ri-as came near the place where they ate the bread after the Lord had given thanks. So when the people saw that Jesus was not there, nor his disciples, they themselves got into the boats and went to Caper'na-um, seeking Jesus. When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, “Rabbi, when did you come here?” Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, you seek me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of man will give to you; for on him has God the Father set his seal.” Then they said to him, “What must we do, to be doing the works of God?” Jesus answered them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.”

To encounter Jesus is to encounter the love and truth that meet us in all His words and deeds. This is what the people who accompanied Him and sought Him at that time experienced, just as it happens to us today if we follow Jesus seriously.

The Lord made it clear to the people who came to Him in Capernaum that their motivation was wrong. They were not seeking Him because of the sign He had done, nor were they drawing the right conclusion from their belief in Him; but they came because they were filled, as Jesus clearly indicated. This was also the reason why Jesus had turned away when He saw that they wanted to make Him king.

But the Lord did not stop at this clarification; He took them further and taught them to aim at what really matters, uttering these unforgettable words: *“Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of man will give to you”*.

Here is an irrevocable guideline for our earthly existence, which will determine our whole life if we let it guide us. It is in line with these other words of the Lord: *"Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well"* (Mt 6:33). Or again: *"Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?"* (Mt 6:26).

Our Lord wants us to look to Him first and foremost, to focus on Him, because only then can His grace be fully unfolded in us and give us all that He has in store for us. As long as our focus remains primarily on earthly things, our ability to love will be tied to our own person and the satisfaction of our needs will be in the foreground. This attitude, however, largely, if not completely, closes us off from the supernatural that God wants to give us.

We must therefore first of all strive to discover and fulfil God's will, for this is our true nourishment, as Jesus explained to His disciples in an earlier passage (Jn 4:34). For Him, as for us, this is the "food that endures for eternal life". In all our efforts, the Lord goes before us and meets us, offering Himself as our food.

Unfortunately, this teaching of Jesus is often not given enough attention. Even among those who profess the Lord, there are too many who have not yet entered into this reality that He offers us. Their thoughts and feelings revolve too much around earthly concerns, so that their lives lack the freedom and joy that come from that "holy unconcern" to which the Lord invites us. Thus they continue to carry a burden of worry from which the Lord has long wished to free them; their steps become heavy and their spirits cannot soar. They have not yet sufficiently assimilated the words of the Letter of Saint Peter: *"Cast all your anxieties on him, for he cares about you"* (1 Pt 5:7).

The people whom Jesus taught in Capernaum then asked Him a fundamental question: *"What must we do, to be doing the works of God?"* Jesus' answer was unequivocal: *"This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent."* (Jn 6:29)

Later He will say very clearly: *"No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him"* (Jn 6:44). If this was true for the people of that time, it is equally true for us today and for all people of all times. We are called to respond to God's invitation to believe in His Son. Everything else follows from this, because the Father has given everything into the hands of Jesus (Mt 11:27), so that He in turn can give it to us. This is the work

of God! When we believe, we enter into this work of grace, which becomes a reality in our lives. All the spiritual goods that our Heavenly Father has prepared for us can begin to unfold in our lives. Therefore, we must strive for the gift of faith that has been given to us, so that, through the works of love, it becomes a living faith.