

25. January 2025

THE GOSPEL OF ST. JOHN  
“Him who comes to me I will not cast out”

Jn 6:30-40

*So they said to Jesus, “Then what sign do you do, that we may see, and believe you? What work do you perform? Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’” Jesus then said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven; my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven, and gives life to the world.” They said to him, “Lord, give us this bread always.” Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; he who comes to me shall not hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst. But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe. All that the Father gives me will come to me; and him who comes to me I will not cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me; and this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up at the last day. For this is the will of my Father, that every one who sees the Son and believes in him should have eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day.”*

Jesus came down from heaven. For the sake of our salvation, He became flesh in the womb of the Virgin Mary. This is what people then and now need to understand. Jesus is the only One who Has seen God (Jn 1:18) and He is God. This is what the Scriptures say and what we believe. It is Jesus who makes the heavenly Father known to us. Moreover, the Father is present in the Son (Jn 14:10). All this, which we Christians believe and live as the truth of faith, we have come to know in the light of the Holy Spirit, and the Church has handed down to us in her authentic teaching. As we follow and listen to Jesus through the Gospel of John, we see His great efforts to communicate to the Jews this truth which has become natural to us.

In today's passage, the Jews want to see a sign that will confirm Jesus in their eyes, a sign like the manna from heaven that their fathers ate in the desert. Jesus uses this expression to lead them to a deeper understanding. The manna was a great sign of the

providential love of the Father who fed His people during their journey in the desert, and it was also meant to strengthen their trust in God's leadership through Moses. But this bread could only nourish the body, it could not satisfy the hunger for eternal life.

Now, God wants to nourish and fill people with good things in all the dimensions of their being and their heavenly vocation. For this, a different kind of food is needed, food that satisfies the soul, that fulfils man's longing, that answers his questions about the meaning of life, that satisfies his hunger for love and answers his search for truth. This can only happen through a deep encounter with God.

This is the food to which Jesus refers when He speaks of "the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven, and gives life to the world". The Jews seem to have a slight intuition that the Lord must be referring to a bread other than the one that satisfies for a moment, because they ask Him to give them this bread always.

The Lord is trying to open their eyes: *"I am the bread of life; he who comes to me shall not hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst."*

It was time to move from faith in manna to faith in the bread of eternal life. The Lord had built a bridge for them to recognise His person, starting from their knowledge of Moses and the patriarchs. He did it in the same way as many later ingenious missionaries, using the knowledge of God that his interlocutors had, however rudimentary, as a "hook" to lead them to a deeper understanding.

But Jesus met with opposition. Although the people saw Him, witnessed the signs He performed and heard the words of life that came from His mouth, they did not believe. The truth could not penetrate them or spread its light.

It is a situation we may encounter also today, when we wonder why this or that person does not embrace the faith despite having heard about Jesus and perhaps even seen a miracle. In general, we cannot give an answer to this question, but it is up to us to keep trying to give an authentic witness in word and deed, in the hope that one day, thanks to God's perseverance in His search for a soul, she will open her doors to Him.

In any case, Jesus kept trying. He does not break off the conversation, but expresses His loving invitation for the Jews and for all of us to know: everyone can come to the Lord

and He will not cast them out. This is the Father's will: that all people take refuge in His Son and receive from Him true life, eternal life. It is His will that no one should perish and fall into the hands of the enemies of God, from whom the Lord has delivered them. But it is necessary to accept His invitation to have eternal life and to be resurrected by the Lord on the last day.

The Church teaches this about the resurrection of the dead: *"In death, the separation of the soul from the body, the human body decays and the soul goes to meet God, while awaiting its reunion with its glorified body. God, in his almighty power, will definitively grant incorruptible life to our bodies by reuniting them with our souls, through the power of Jesus' Resurrection."* (Catechism of the Catholic Church, n. 997).

We will continue to accompany the Lord in His discourse and see how He tirelessly strives to win people for the Kingdom of God.