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Saturday's Gospel: The Apostles' Rest

Gospel for Saturday in the 4th Week of Ordinary Time, and commentary.

Gospel (*Mk 6:30-34*)

The apostles returned to Jesus, and told him all that they had done and taught. And he said to them, “Come away by yourselves to a lonely place, and rest a while.” For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. And they went away in the boat to a lonely place by themselves.

Now many saw them going, and knew them, and they ran there on foot from all the towns, and got there ahead of them. As he went ashore he saw a great throng, and he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things.

Commentary

The apostles return from the mission our Lord had entrusted to them. After several weeks spent preaching and healing the sick, we can imagine how eager they were to tell the Master about the abundant fruit of their efforts. On another occasion, Saint Luke tells us that the disciples sent out by Jesus “returned with joy” (*Lk* 10:17). Christians of all times have experienced the same thing:

contemplating the wonders, sometimes hidden, that God accomplishes through the poor instruments that we are.

Jesus would have been happy to listen to the apostles telling him about their adventures in the cities and towns of Palestine. And seeing the tiredness in their faces, he suggested that they go with him to rest for a while.

Surely this rest, which was not the only break from their intense activity during those years, would involve a specific plan: a walk or a special meal, perhaps with a good wine. But above all it meant being alone with our Lord, a chance to converse with Him.

Luke's Gospel recounts that one day Jesus "was praying alone and the disciples were with him" (*Lk 9:18*). This is a curious phrase because it shows us our Lord in a shared

solitude. For those who seek to live in God's presence there is no complete loneliness, because we are always with Him. "Come to me, all who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (*Mt 11:28*). And this reminds us that true rest, necessary and sometimes indispensable, cannot be selfish or lonely, because it is always a relationship, with God and with others.

When he arrives at the destination chosen to rest with his apostles, Jesus once again encounters the crowd that is eagerly following him. "And he had compassion on them" and began to teach them many things. We see in this brief excursion of the Twelve with the Master what the life of an apostle of Christ should be like. As Saint Josemaría said, this life is expressed in three "symptoms": "hunger to know the Master, constant concern for souls, and

perseverance that nothing can shake” (*The Way*, 934).

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