

Wednesday's Gospel: Compassion on the Crowd

Gospel for Wednesday in the First Week of Advent, and commentary.

Gospel (*Mt 15:29-37*)

And Jesus went on from there and passed along the Sea of Galilee. And he went up on the mountain, and sat down there. And great crowds came to him, bringing with them the lame, the maimed, the blind, the dumb, and many others, and they put them at his feet, and he healed them, so that the throng wondered, when they saw the dumb speaking, the maimed

whole, the lame walking, and the blind seeing; and they glorified the God of Israel.

Then Jesus called his disciples to him and said, “I have compassion on the crowd, because they have been with me now three days, and have nothing to eat; and I am unwilling to send them away hungry, lest they faint on the way.”

And the disciples said to him, “Where are we to get bread enough in the desert to feed so great a crowd?” And Jesus said to them, “How many loaves have you?” They said, “Seven, and a few small fish.”

And commanding the crowd to sit down on the ground, he took the seven loaves and the fish, and having given thanks he broke them and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. And they all ate and were satisfied;

and they took up seven baskets full of the broken pieces left over.

Commentary

Today's Gospel passage recounts one of the miraculous multiplications of loaves and fishes that our Lord worked for the crowd.

Jesus knows very well why he has come down to earth. As a Christmas carol that Saint Josemaría liked very much says: "My Father is from Heaven / my mother too / I came down to earth to suffer." Our Lord came into the world to carry out the Redemption.

The Salvation that the Son of God offers us is for everyone, although only some will welcome it in their hearts. Jesus knows perfectly well what the outcome of his efforts will

be. But that doesn't mean he stops teaching and giving himself for "the crowd," that is, for everyone.

This is what we see in the prelude to the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves and fishes. Jesus feels compassion for the crowd that is following him and that hasn't eaten for several days, and he is "forced" to exercise his power for their benefit.

This is how Jesus' heart is. He is always compassionate, with infinite desires to give himself, to give himself to us, although often we fail to recognize him or welcome him into our own heart. But our Lord isn't deterred by this, and never imposes himself. He continues sowing his doctrine, giving Himself, feeding us.

Our Lord invites us today to think about what our own reaction is like when, after giving ourselves to others, we don't see any apparent

results in their way of acting. Do we become discouraged and think it is our own fault? Do we turn our back on these people because they refuse to accept what is freely offered them? Or do we continue accompanying them regardless of their circumstances and attitudes? Jesus, gentle and humble of heart, shows us the way.

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