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Tuesday's Gospel: Forgetfulness of God

Gospel for Tuesday in the 6th Week of Ordinary Time, and commentary.

Gospel (*Mk 8:14-21*)

Now they had forgotten to bring bread; and they had only one loaf with them in the boat. And Jesus cautioned them, saying, "Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod."

And they discussed it with one another, saying, "We have no bread." And being aware of it, Jesus said to them, "Why do you discuss the fact

that you have no bread? Do you not yet perceive or understand? Are your hearts hardened? Having eyes do you not see, and having ears do you not hear? And do you not remember? When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you take up?” They said to him, “Twelve.” “And the seven for the four thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you take up?” And they said to him, “Seven.”

And he said to them, “Do you not yet understand?”

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Commentary

Today we see that Jesus is still thinking about his unpleasant encounter with those who, lacking faith and in order to tempt him, had asked him for a sign. Using the image

of leaven, he warns his disciples of a serious danger: letting the same attitude take root in their own hearts. Leaven has the quality of making the dough rise. Its use in some foods is essential, and once it has acted, there is no turning back. Therefore, when used as an image, it can have either a positive or a negative meaning. In the parable of the leaven that a woman puts into three measures of flour, Jesus wants to express the transforming power of his Kingdom (cf. *Mt 13:33*). But here it is an expression of lack of faith, of hardness of heart, of duplicity.

Jesus sees that his disciples are on another “wavelength,” worried about their own forgetfulness: they have not brought enough provisions for their journey to the other side of the Sea of Galilee. So much bread had been left over after the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves! And now they are in danger of going

hungry. They are almost blind, as though Jesus were not with them. They have eyes to see him but they do not see; they have ears to hear him but they do not hear (cf. *Jer* 5:21).

Therefore their true and dangerous forgetfulness is not forgetting the bread but failing to remember God's actions with them. He reproaches them in a fatherly way: "Don't you remember...?" Don't they realize that with Jesus at their side, they have nothing to fear. There is no need to worry if Jesus is with them. But their supernatural outlook is still weak; they have not yet received the Holy Spirit. It is comforting to see Jesus' patience with his disciples. He has not chosen them for their great qualities, because they are irreproachable men. But they have the simplicity needed to listen to Jesus, although on this occasion, to a severe rebuke. Therefore he will

continue to rely on them in the mission of bringing the good leaven of the Kingdom of God to every corner of the world.

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