

"Lord, we are hungry"

Homily of Pope Francis on May 7 in Skopje, the birthplace of Saint Teresa of Calcutta.

"Prisoners of a virtual reality, we lost the taste and flavour of the truly real."

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"I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst" (*Jn 6:35*). We have just heard the Lord speak these words.

In the Gospel, a crowd had gathered around Jesus. They had just seen the multiplication of the loaves; it was one of those events that remained etched in the mind and heart of the first community of disciples. There had been a party: a feast that showed God's superabundant generosity and concern for his children, who became brothers and sisters in the sharing of bread. Let us imagine for a moment that crowd. Something had changed. For a few moments, those thirsting and silent people who followed Jesus in search of a word were able to touch with their hands and feel in their bodies the miracle of a fraternity capable of satisfying superabundantly.

The Lord came to give life to the world. He always does so in a way that defies the narrowness of our calculations, the mediocrity of our expectations and the superficiality of our rationalizations. A way that

questions our viewpoints and our certainties, while inviting us to move to a new horizon enabling us to view reality in a different way. He is the living Bread come down from heaven, who tells us: “Whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst”.

All those people discovered that hunger for bread has other names too: hunger for God, hunger for fraternity, hunger for encounter and a shared feast.

We have become accustomed to eating the stale bread of disinformation and ending up as prisoners of dishonour, labels and ignominy. We thought that conformism would satisfy our thirst, yet we ended up drinking only indifference and insensitivity. We fed ourselves on dreams of splendour and grandeur, and ended up

consuming distraction, insularity and solitude. We gorged ourselves on networking, and lost the taste of fraternity. We looked for quick and safe results, only to find ourselves overwhelmed by impatience and anxiety. Prisoners of a virtual reality, we lost the taste and flavour of the truly real.

Let us not be afraid to say it clearly: Lord, we are hungry. We are hungry, Lord, for the bread of your word, which can open up our insularity and our solitude. We are hungry, Lord, for an experience of fraternity in which indifference, dishonour and ignominy will not fill our tables or take pride of place in our homes. We are hungry, Lord, for encounters where your word can raise hope, awaken tenderness and sensitize the heart by opening paths of transformation and conversion.

We are hungry, Lord, to experience, like that crowd, the multiplication of your mercy, which can break down our stereotypes and communicate the Father's compassion for each person, especially those for whom no one cares: the forgotten or despised. Let us not be afraid to say it clearly: we are hungry for bread, Lord: the bread of your word, the bread of fraternity.

In a few moments, we will approach the table of the altar, to be fed by the Bread of Life. We do so in obedience to the Lord's command: "Whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst" (*Jn 6:35*). All that the Lord asks of us is that we come. He invites us to set out, to be on the move, to go forth. He urges us to draw near to him and to become sharers in his life and mission. "Come", he says. For the Lord, that does not mean simply moving from one place to another.

Instead, it means letting ourselves be moved and transformed by his word, in our choices, our feelings and our priorities, daring in this way to adopt his own way of acting and speaking. For his is “the language of bread that speaks of tenderness, companionship, generous dedication to others” (*Corpus Christi Homily*, Buenos Aires, 1995), the language of a love that is concrete and tangible, because it is daily and real.

In every Eucharist, the Lord breaks and shares himself. He invites us to break and share ourselves together with him, and to be part of that miraculous multiplication that desires to reach out and touch, with tenderness and compassion, every corner of this city, this country, and this land.

Hunger for bread, hunger for fraternity, hunger for God. How well Mother Teresa knew all this, and

desired to build her life on the twin pillars of Jesus incarnate in the Eucharist and Jesus incarnate in the poor! Love received and love given. Two inseparable pillars that marked her journey and kept her moving, eager also to quench her own hunger and thirst. She went to the Lord exactly as she went to the despised, the unloved, the lonely and the forgotten. In drawing near to her brothers and sisters, she found the face of the Lord, for she knew that “love of God and love of neighbour become one: in the least of the brethren we find Jesus himself, and in Jesus we find God” (*Deus Caritas Est*, 15). And that love alone was capable of satisfying her hunger.

Brothers and sisters, today the Risen Lord continues to walk among us, in the midst of our daily life and experience. He knows our hunger and he continues to tell us: “Whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and

“whoever believes in me shall never thirst” (*Jn* 6:35). Let us encourage one another to get up and experience the abundance of his love. Let us allow him to satisfy our hunger and thirst: in the sacrament of the altar and in the sacrament of our brothers and sisters.

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