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Gospel for 8 January: True Nourishment

Gospel for January 8th, and
commentary.

Gospel (*Mk* 6:34-44)

As Jesus 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.

And when it grew late, his disciples came to him and said, “This is a lonely place, and the hour is now late; send them away, to go into the country and villages round about and buy themselves something to

eat.” But he answered them, “You give them something to eat.” And they said to him, “Shall we go and buy two hundred denarii worth of bread, and give it to them to eat?” And he said to them, “How many loaves have you? Go and see.” And when they had found out, they said, “Five, and two fish.”

Then he commanded them all to sit down by companies upon the green grass. So they sat down in groups, by hundreds and by fifties. And taking the five loaves and the two fish he looked up to heaven, and blessed, and broke the loaves, and gave them to the disciples to set before the people; and he divided the two fish among them all. And they all ate and were satisfied. And they took up twelve baskets full of broken pieces and of the fish. And those who ate the loaves were five thousand men.

Commentary

Jesus meets the need of those around him. God has created us as essentially needy beings: we all need food, education, affection, rest. Sheep without a shepherd are lost. People without someone to give them the nourishment they need for strength and guidance for their lives are also lost. Jesus has come to bring us that food; in him we find the meaning of our life. Thanks to him the darkness that prevented us from recognizing who we truly are dissipates. We can give the body all sorts of nourishment, but not all of it nourishes in the same way. Christ himself becomes our food par excellence.

The people following Jesus in the above Gospel passage forgot about the food their body needed. And our Lord used that situation to enlighten his disciples. Food cannot be

postponed for a long period. But where is that food to be found? What food does the Gospel for today's Mass really tell us about? The food the body needs can be purchased. The disciples, however, could not provide that food for so many people. But the food that is offered generously multiplies, and as happened to the widow from Zarephath in the first book of Kings (17:8-16), when it is consumed it does not run out.

The Word of God must reach every epoch and corner of the world. And it does so through those with the mission of bringing the nourishment of the Word to the people around them, so that they in turn bring it to others. And thus the food multiplies and can feed ever more people in more and more places. Jesus reminds us that his request to feed the hungry concerns all Christians. It is up to us to see how to make this a reality on a

daily basis, with our words and with our deeds.

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