

19th Sunday in Ordinary Time – B

(1 Kings 19:4-8; Ephesians 4:30-5:2; and John 6:41-51)

Excerpts from Pope Francis - Angelus 09 August 2015 & 12 August 2018

by Father Charles Fillion

08 August 2021

Brothers and sisters, we continue reading Chapter Six of the Gospel according to John, in which Jesus, after the great miracle of the multiplication of the loaves, explains to the people the *meaning* of that “*sign*”. From the experience of hunger and the sign of bread, Jesus reveals himself and offers an invitation to believe in him. The people seek him, the people listen to him, because they are still enthusiastic about the miracle. Remember, they want to make him king! However, when Jesus affirms that he is the true bread given by God, many are shocked, they do not understand, and “the people began to complain about Jesus”.

Those coming to mass during the week heard the same complaint stories of the Israelites. They were in the desert and complained against Moses and God. Because they did not trust God, those people never got to enter the Promised Land, but only their children.

What Jesus says astonishes us, and makes us think. It introduces the *dynamic of faith*, which is a *relationship*: the relationship between the human person — all of us — and the Person of Jesus, where the Father plays a decisive role, and, of course, the Holy Spirit does too, which is implied here. It is not enough to meet Jesus, it is not enough to read the Bible, the Gospel; yes, even though this is important, it is not enough. It is not even enough to witness a miracle, such as that of the multiplication of the loaves. So many people were in close contact with Jesus and they did not believe. In fact, they even despised and condemned him. And I ask myself: Why is that?

Were they not attracted by God the Father? Maybe, but their hearts were closed to the action of God’s Spirit. If your heart is always closed, faith doesn’t enter! God the Father draws us to Jesus: it is we who open or close our hearts. On the other hand, *faith*, which is like a *seed* deep in the heart, *blossoms* when we let the Father draw us to Jesus. We “go to Him” with an open heart, without prejudices; then we recognize in his face the Face of God, and in his words the Word of God, because the Holy Spirit helps us enter into the relationship of love and of life between Jesus and God the Father. And there we receive a gift, the gift of the faith.

In Jesus, in his “flesh” — that is, in his concrete humanity — is present in the Eucharist. Those who let themselves be drawn by God, go to Jesus and go with faith, and receive from Him life, eternal life. But what does that really change in my life? If we receive the Body of Christ, it should change our lives.

In today's second reading, Saint Paul addresses an urgent invitation to us: "Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God". How does the Holy Spirit become saddened? We all received him in Baptism and in Confirmation. Therefore, in order not to sadden the Holy Spirit, it is necessary to live in a manner consistent with the promises of Baptism that are renewed in Confirmation. Every year at during Easter Vigil and Easter Sunday, we renew our promises of Baptism in two aspects: *rejecting evil and clinging to good*.

Rejecting evil means saying 'no' to temptation, to sin, to Satan. More concretely, it means saying 'no' to a culture of death that manifests itself in escaping from reality towards a false happiness that is expressed in lies, deceit, injustice and in despising others. The new life given to us in Baptism has the Holy Spirit as its source and rejects any behaviour dominated by feelings of division and discord. This is why the Apostle Paul urges to "put away (...) all bitterness and wrath and anger and wrangling and slander, together with all malice". These elements or vices which unsettle the joy of the Holy Spirit, poison the heart and lead to cursing God and our neighbours.

But it is not enough to refrain from doing evil in order to be a good Christian. It is necessary to *cling to good* and to do good. And then Saint Paul continues: "be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you" (v. 32). This is not obvious in our life, even for me as a priest. Fortunately, there is forgiveness. Often, we hear someone say: "I do no harm to anyone". Do they think they are saints? How many people do no evil but, at the same time, do no good. Their life goes by in indifference, apathy and lukewarmness. This attitude is contrary to the Gospel.

Saint Alberto Hurtado from Chili used to say: "It is good to do no evil, but it is evil to do no good". It is not enough to refrain from hate. One must forgive. It is not enough not to refrain from causing division. We must bring peace where there is none. It is not enough to refrain from speaking ill of others. We must interrupt when we hear others speak badly about someone: stopping the gossip: this is doing good. If we do not oppose evil, we feed it implicitly. It is necessary to intervene where evil spreads because evil spreads in the absence of audacious Christians.

May the Virgin Mary sustain us with her maternal intercession so that, every day, each of us may say 'no' to evil and 'yes' to good, through our actions. Let us learn from our Mother Mary, joy and gratitude through the gift of faith. A gift that is not "private", but is a gift to be shared: it is a gift "for the life of the world"!