

## Commentary on the Gospel for Sun, Jun 2nd 2024

Today's passage is the concluding part of the so-called discourse on the Bread of Life by Jesus in the synagogue of Capernaum, after the multiplication of the loaves and fishes.

The miracle aroused widespread wonder and people wanted to take him by force to make him king (Jn 6:14-15). They are interested in Jesus just because they think he is able to satisfy, through miracles, their material needs.

Instead, in Capernaum, the crowd does not understand the meaning of the miracles, and they search for the "food that perishes." Therefore, Jesus takes up the task of presenting himself as the bread of life, which comes from heaven (Jn 6:33-35). He declares that whoever listens to him assimilates his message, his Gospel, and feeds himself of the words of life.

Jesus makes an even more surprising statement. The bread to eat is not only his teachings but his own flesh. "The bread I shall give is my flesh, and I will give it for the life of the world." These are the opening words of today's passage (v. 51). "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" (v. 52). We should be careful not to be misled by wrong interpretations.

There are many interpretations, derived from devotional and intimate catechesis, but not supported by biblical foundations. Some of the eucharistic spiritualities teach us about Jesus a "divine prisoner," –locked up in the tabernacle, who feels lonely and sad! This spirituality exhorted people to go to church to "keep company, to console Jesus!"

It is important to be in communion with the Father and Jesus; but it does not mean that Jesus is lonely and that we must be consoling Jesus! Receiving Holy Communion is not some kind of pill that works automatically and heals the sick. To "eat his flesh and drink his blood," it is necessary to listen to and meditate on the Word of God first.

One example to explain the relationship between the Eucharist and the Word of God is that one person signs a contract and enters into an alliance. Before signing the contract, one must first know and carefully evaluate all the clauses. Whoever agrees to become one with Christ in the sacrament of the Eucharist, must be aware of the proposal – or the terms and conditions – made to him through the Gospel, and take a firm decision to accept it.

The change, the metamorphosis, will take place very slowly. In the end, the miracle will be accomplished through humble listening to the Word and communion with the Body of Christ. One day, the disciple will relish the transformation performed in him by the Spirit at work in the sacrament and he will exclaim, like Paul: Now "it is no longer me; Christ lives in me" (Gal 2:20).