

Hard teaching

Today we finish chapter 6 of Saint John's Gospel with a sad ending. I prefer movies with happy endings. Life is hard, and we priest constantly touch human weaknesses. People bring to us their pile of rubbish and leave it with us. We try to take that manure and leave it at Jesus feet, for him to fertilise the soil. Movies help us to escape, to dream of another world, to hope of heaven, to know that there is a place where there is always a happy ending, where the good guy after killing all the baddies, walks away into the sunset, hand in hand with the most beautiful girl.

Jesus knew that the Eucharist was going to be a hard teaching. It produced debate, arguments, scandal and eventually people leaving him. As a result of that, the Gospel says that "many of his disciples returned to their former way of life and no longer accompanied him." If we don't believe in the real presence of the Eucharist, we go back to our former sinful life. We cannot remain indifferent in front of this amazing reality: either we stop following him or we become more attached to him. There is a lot of debate nowadays about giving Holy Communion to politicians who defend abortion. Jesus has come to comfort the afflicted, but also to afflict the comfortable.

Jesus looks at the disappearing crowd until he is left alone with the twelve. He turns around and asks them with a voice of disappointment: "Do you also want to leave?" We can see their sad faces looking at the multitude leaving in the distance, their hope of a great human success evaporating. They are thinking to themselves: "Why did he had to be so hard, so strong in his teaching? He could have softened his ideas a bit." It is the same attitude in the world today, of so many in the Church. Jesus is continually asking us this question: Where are you going? Are you leaving me alone?

Simon Peter answers for us: "Master, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life." He puts in words what is in our minds: We haven't found anybody else. Jesus is amazing. But we need more faith to believe in his teaching, to act accordingly, to behave in a way that we know that Jesus is present in the tabernacle. Every time we come here in front of him, we need to love him with the same question: To whom shall we go?

A famous Catholic apologist, recounts how he became a defender of the faith. He wasn't happy with his life, didn't like his job as a salesman, his marriage was in crisis and didn't know what to do. He decided to spend one hour in front of the Blessed Sacrament every day for a month, in a nearby church at lunch time. He says that this changed his life. He decided to quit his job and try to sell the faith to the disappointed. Where do we go when we are in crisis, when things are not making us happy, when we are all over the place? Back to Jesus, back to the tabernacle. Here is where we find meaning in our lives, where we recover our peace, where we find true joy.