

FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT



GOSPEL: SAINT JOHN 6:1–15

Abandonment to God during trials and dryness

20.1 First Point

It seems in today's Gospel that Jesus Christ wants to suggest that there are times of trial and dryness when souls cannot find much help from other people, either because these people are not sufficiently enlightened by talent or experience or because God does not give them a sufficiently great abundance of graces to relieve those who are in difficulty.

Souls in this circumstance, nevertheless, must not hesitate to speak with their spiritual directors, because this is the means established by God and because these directors can always help to some extent.

On this occasion in today's Gospel, *Jesus Christ did not hesitate to speak to his disciples to tell them to provide for the needs of the people*, even though they were not able to do so. At the same time, he made use of them to distribute the bread that he had multiplied to feed everyone.¹

This is how God wants you always to turn to those who guide you, represented in this Gospel by the Apostles, even though at times and in certain difficulties, doing this may seem to you quite useless. God wishes you always to use, insofar as you are able, the ordinary means that he provides for your guidance, even if this is without any success.

20.2 Second Point

In your times of trouble, when you have had recourse to those who are appointed to guide you and they have been unable to provide a suitable remedy for your difficulty, God wants you, then, to remain completely abandoned to his guidance, awaiting from him alone and from his goodness all the help you need. Follow the example of this crowd of people who had come following Jesus Christ and who waited patiently for him to provide for their nourishment without even taking the trouble to lay their needs before him.

You ought to be convinced that God will not allow you to be tempted and burdened beyond your strength.² When people can do nothing to help you, then it is that God does everything for you, wonderfully showing at one and the same time his power and his goodness. This is why you must abandon yourself to God, as the people who followed our Lord did, to suffer as much as it pleases him (as being an advantage for you) or to be delivered from your trials by the means that God judges most profitable for you, without worrying about trying to achieve peace by your own efforts, which will often be useless.

20.3 Third Point

After we have abandoned ourselves to God like this, it usually happens that God makes us experience very extraordinary effects of his goodness and protection, as he shows us in the Gospel today: after he multiplied the five loaves and the two fishes offered to him and five thousand people—not counting the little children—had eaten their fill, there still remained a large quantity.³

Be assured, then, that once you have placed yourself in God's hands, willing to suffer whatever and as much as he may desire, although he still leaves you in sorrow, he will help you by his grace to endure this trial, perhaps in a way that is not obvious, or else he will deliver you from it by surprising means and at a time when you least expect it. This is what David assures us he experienced in his own difficulties, when he says: I waited on the Lord with great patience, and finally he heard me; he granted my prayers and withdrew me from the depths of misery and from the deep pit. He set my foot upon a rock and guided my steps. Many people, on seeing this marvel, have learned to revere God and to place all their confidence in him.⁴

1. Mt 14:16, 19 3. Jn 6:9–13 4. Ps 40:2–4

2. 1 Cor 10:13

