

## **Second Sunday of Easter: Divine Mercy C/2007**

Human life requires a minimum of trust so that it might be possible to be livable. Without mutual trust toward one another, it is impossible to live together. There are many reasons why people come to trust individuals or institutions. For example, we trust some people because of the experience we have of them or the competence they have in their domain of knowledge. We put our money in a bank or send our children to school, because these institutions have proven themselves over time.

However, if it happens that someone willing to travel would like to find a reliable company, the least he can do is to refer to a travel agency and ask for advice. If, from the proposal of the travel agency, he travels for example with United Airlines and that at the end of his trip he is satisfied, the primordial trust he had was not based on any proof, but on the testimony from the travel agency.

This example of trust based on testimony helps us understand the central message of today's Gospel when Jesus says, "Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed". In fact, Christian faith is, above all, trust in God. Such a trust is not based on some proof or experience, but on the testimony of those who have been with Jesus from his beginning until his last day on earth. It is that testimony the apostles have given that has come to us today.

We do not need scientific proof to attest Christian faith or the resurrection of Jesus. Thus, the reproach of Jesus to Thomas sounds correct, "Do not be unbelieving, but believe". With these words, Jesus would like to tell him to trust the testimony given to him and the witness of his friends, that he is alive.

It is really striking to see that once Thomas was in the presence of Jesus and that he asked him to touch his scars, he was incapable of doing so. In other words, in the regime of faith, the importance is not to see or to touch God's mysteries, but the interior attitude that leads to the openness of heart and the recognition of the risen Christ. Faith can never be founded on what one sees. As the French writer Anthony of St Exupery has put it rightly in his small book "The Little Prince": What is essential is invisible to the eyes; one sees well only with the heart." We can approach God's mysteries only with our heart. The problem of our time is precisely that of giving eyes to our hearts so that we may see beyond our senses.

About the resurrection of Jesus, it belongs to the realm of historical facts and the testimony of faith. It belongs to historical facts in the sense that under Pontius Pilate a certain Jesus of Nazareth was put to death on a cross and his disciples ran away. A few days later, his disciples went to the tomb and found it empty. They claimed that he is alive, as he has appeared to them after his resurrection. The tracks of this testimony can be found in the New Testament, as in the first reading of the Acts of the Apostles and the Gospel.

What does resurrection mean? Resurrection means the restoration of a person to bodily life after death. It is not the same thing as the immortality of the soul, since it involves the whole person, body and soul, in a restoration to life. Neither is it

the same as resuscitation or reincarnation, since in both cases the person will eventually die again and not be brought back to life. All this helps understand why the risen Christ shows his hands and feet to his disciples. He wanted to let them realize that he is the same Jesus of Nazareth, the same person, and that he is not a ghost.

However, that person belongs henceforth to the world of God. He is no more subjected to the limitations of time and space. That is why the risen Christ could at anytime appear and disappear in the middle of his disciples, even when the doors were locked.

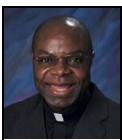
The risen Christ empowers his disciples by bringing them, and us alike, his peace. There is, indeed, no more valuable thing someone can wish for himself than peace of heart. Jesus knows well that we live in a troubled world, where we are constantly confronted with insoluble problems and difficulties. Like the disciples, at times, our projects of life have been broken and our dreams turned into nightmares. Jesus comes to assure us that he does not abandon us; he brings us his peace.

To maintain that peace alive in us, we need his Holy Spirit. Without the gift of the Holy Spirit, it is impossible to keep the peace of Christ within us and to spread it around us. The Holy Spirit is the strength without which we cannot please God. The transformation we see in the disciples after the resurrection of Jesus comes precisely from the Holy Spirit they have received.

In order to be in peace with God, with ourselves and our fellow human beings, Jesus gives us another gift, that is reconciliation through confession. "Receive the Holy spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained", says Jesus. This is a ministry and a sacrament left to the Church, exercised in the name of Jesus by the priests. When the sacrament of confession is practiced with sincerity of heart and confidence in the Holy Spirit, it brings us the interior healing we really need. This Sunday of the Divine Mercy reminds us that Jesus loves us and wants to forgive us our sins. Let us not miss such an opportunity to make peace with him.

Let us remember that Christ is present, in an invisible way, in any sacrament as he is now in our midst. Anytime we gather in his name, he is present. Today the invisible presence of Jesus is manifested anytime we, as Christians, prolong the gestures of Jesus by taking care of the poor and the needy. This is what the disciples did, as we heard in the first reading. Our testimony to the resurrection of Jesus has to be done not only in words and speech, but also in deeds of solidarity and sharing with the needy. Let us ask the Lord to help us build a community with a lifestyle that witnesses to his resurrection. May God bless you!

**Acts 5, 12-16; Revelation 1, 9-11a, 12-13, 17-19; John 20, 19-31**



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