

3rd Sunday of Easter A/2011

Once Jesus was risen from the dead, one of the apostles' duties was to tell the story of Jesus to those who had been mistaken about him by crucifying him. That is exactly what Peter does in the Acts of the Apostles before the crowd of the Jews.

In fact, Peter recalls the mission and work of Jesus among their nation, how he came from God and performed mighty deeds, wonders and signs. Although, he was put to death, God vindicated him by raising him from death, because it was impossible for him to be held by it. If so, everybody should understand that his death was part of God's plan and foreseen a long time ago by the prophets.

David himself, to whom was made the promise to put one of his descendants on his throne, foresaw the resurrection of Jesus. He was really right when he stated that the Lord would not abandon the soul of his servant to the netherworld nor let the flesh of his holy one see corruption.

For Peter, God has made the apostles the witnesses of Jesus' resurrection. Now that Jesus is exalted at the right hand of the Father, he has received the power of the Holy Spirit, which he has also lavished on his apostles so that they bear witness to him before the people.

What is behind this text is the idea that the passion and death of Jesus were not accidental, but part of God's eternal plan. Another idea is that the passion and death of Jesus are not only the fulfillment of the prophecy, but also a proof of God's love for the world.

However, the understanding that Jesus' Passion and death were according to God's plan was a slow process that has led the apostles from ignorance to the knowledge of the scriptures, as we see with the story of the disciples of Emmaus.

As the Gospel relates, the disciples on the road to Emmaus were disappointed about what happened to them with the death of Jesus. They hoped that he would do something for their nation, but things did not go as expected. By returning to their village with all their concerns, it was as though their dream was dead.

By talking on the road, they were certainly worried and bitter, as it can happen to anyone of us when life seems to be cruel and expectations destroyed by the negative winds of life. At the same time, they were blinded by their bitterness and sorrow for having lost Jesus. And yet, Jesus was there walking with them in this dark and sad moment of their life; but they did not recognize him.

As an unknown companion of the road, he tried to rouse them from the sleep of their sadness by explaining to them the scripture about him. If God is the master of everything and of every life, was it not true that what happened to him was known to God?

Then came a moment of truth and revelation: the meal. The meal is always a wonderful moment of sitting together with people and of sharing some of who we are and what they are. It is a privileged moment of approaching people and of spending some time with them in order to know them a little bit better.

O! Yes, that is what happened when Jesus broke the bread in a gesture that reminded them of the Lord. At that time, the risen Christ opened their eyes to recognize him in the breaking of the bread.

True enough. It was not any companion who talked to them on the road, but Jesus himself who was walking with them and explained to them the meaning of the scriptures. They realized that their hearts were burning when he was talking to them, healing the wounds of their sorrow and bitterness. And when they went back to Jerusalem to report to the apostles what happened to them, Jesus appeared again, confirming what they already knew, that he is alive.

The story of the disciples of Emmaus is a story of each of us with all the meander and the vicissitudes of our lives. Sometimes we are so beaten down with problems, worries and disappointments, that we do not see anything else than our sadness and sorrow.

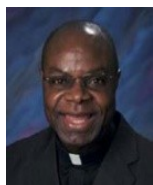
When we find ourselves in such a situation, we really feel alone. We believe easily that we are abandoned by all, friends, family and even God. And yet, we are not alone. God is always with us, sharing with us all these sad moments of our life. That is what Jesus wanted to teach the two friends as they were talking among themselves about their disappointments and broken dreams.

But the important question is this: when we are overwhelmed with problems, where do we find strength in order to cope with them? Here, Jesus teaches us that it is in the word of God that we can find consolation and relief when we are down. The two friends have experienced that when Jesus explained to them from the scriptures what was written about him, their hearts were burning. It means literally that they felt lifted up from their anguish and sadness as though a medicine was poured on a wound. That is what the word of God does when we offer our problems to the Lord. Not that they are over once and for all, but at least we know that we are not alone to bear them, because God gives us his consolation.

Let me finish now by referring to the meal through which the two friends recognized Jesus. That meal is the symbol of the Eucharist. In the Eucharist, Christ gives himself to us as food in order to strengthen us on our pilgrimage. If we have the eyes of faith, we can recognize Jesus coming to us in order to console us and encourage us to keep going and fighting in this journey of life. In a few minutes, we will come to the table of Eucharist. Let us remember that it is Jesus we receive in order to continue to live.

Let us ask Christ to guide us in this journey until the day we meet him in heaven and share with him in the eternal banquet of heaven. May God bless you all!

Acts 2, 14, 22-33; 1 Peter 1, 17-21; Luke 24, 13-35



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