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Meditations: Sunday of the Third Week of Easter (Year B)

Some reflections that can assist
our prayer on this Sunday in
Easter time.

04/14/2024

- The Risen Christ appears to his disciples
 - The first Christians announced God's mercy
 - We are witnesses to Jesus
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WE HAVE ARRIVED at the third week of Easter. The Gospel introduces us today to the Cenacle when night has fallen, on the same day as Jesus' resurrection. The disciples from Emmaus *told what had happened on the road, and how he was known to them in the breaking of the bread* (Lk 24:35). Doubt is no longer possible; many testimonies in the course of the day have confirmed the Lord's resurrection. This is the only topic of their conversation. While speaking about these things, helping each other to remember the Lord's promises, *Jesus himself stood among them, and said to them, "Peace to you"* (Lk 24:36). He greeted them with peace, as He had once recommended they do when entering a house (cf. Lk 10:5).

Although those present in the upper room were already convinced of our Lord's resurrection, they reacted with surprise and fear at the

apparition, thinking it was a spirit (cf. *Lk 24:37*). Just as had happened that night on the sea, when He had appeared to them walking on the water in the midst of the storm (cf. *Mk 6:50*). Now Jesus insists on the reality of his physical presence. He shows them his wounds as if they were his credentials, his “identity document.” *He said to them: “Why are you troubled, and why do questionings rise in your hearts? See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself; handle me, and see; for a spirit has not flesh and bones as you see that I have.” And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet (Lk 24:38-40).*

Faced with the apostles’ confusion, which the evangelist attributes to the joy that had overwhelmed them, Jesus gives them another proof: *Have you anything here to eat? (Lk 24:41).* Once again He shares a meal with them, as He had done three days

before when instituting the Eucharist. By doing so Jesus shows that “he does not come from the realm of the dead, which he has definitively left behind. On the contrary, he comes from the realm of pure life, from God.”^[1] We can follow Saint Josemaría’s advice when we contemplate Christ’s resurrection: “Before this decade is over, you have kissed the wounds on His feet, and I, more daring because I am more a child, have placed my lips upon His open side.”^[2]

THEN HE OPENED their minds to understand the scriptures (Lk 24:45). As He had done with the disciples from Emmaus, our Lord gives them the grace to understand the Old Testament prophecies referring to Him. Jesus continues teaching them, as He had done for the past three

years. Now He gives them special help in interpreting the Scriptures. With that light, the disciples begin to understand the meaning of everything they had lived through alongside the Master. *And he said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem"* (Lk 24:46-47). Inspired by these words, the first Christians announced the closeness of God's mercy, now much more than simply a promise. From then on the disciples would be ministers of reconciliation, since Jesus himself had told them: *If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven* (Jn 20:23).

In the first reading of the Mass we hear the testimony of Saint Peter: *Repent therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out* (Acts

3:19). And in the second reading we recall the words of Saint John: *I am writing this to you so that you may not sin; but if any one does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the expiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world (1 Jn 2:1-2)*. Every year, the Church renews this invitation at Easter time. “Confession is the passage from misery to mercy; it is God’s writing upon the heart. There – in our hearts – we constantly read that we are precious in the eyes of God, that he is our Father and that he loves us even more than we love ourselves . . . How many times do we feel alone, that we have lost our way in life. How many times do we no longer know how to begin again, overwhelmed by the effort to accept ourselves. We need to start over, but we don’t know where to begin . . . Only by being forgiven can we set out again with fresh confidence, after

having experienced the joy of being loved by the Father to the full. Only through God's forgiveness do truly new things happen within us."^[3] —

THE LITURGY makes present the Paschal Mystery and thus our apostolic mission. Like twenty centuries ago, the Risen Jesus says to us now: *You are witnesses of these things (Lk 24:48)*. This call to the apostolate is part of our Christian identity. "The new evangelization calls for personal involvement on the part of each of the baptized. Every Christian is challenged, here and now, to be actively engaged in evangelization; indeed, anyone who has truly experienced God's saving love does not need much time or lengthy training to go out and proclaim that love."^[4] —

You are witnesses of these things (Lk 24:48). But how can we be good witnesses? “We can only be witnesses if we know Christ personally, and not solely through others but from our own lives and from our own personal encounter with Christ. In truly meeting Him in our life of faith we become witnesses and thus can contribute to the newness of the world, to eternal life.”^[5] Living with a sense of mission requires having a heart in love, being friends of the Risen Jesus, drawing close to Him in the Bread and in the Word. “Christ is alive,” Saint Josemaría said, “with flesh like mine, but glorious; with a heart of flesh like mine . . . ‘For I know that my Redeemer lives’ (*Job* 19:25). My Redeemer, my Friend, my Father, my King, my God, my Love. He lives! He cares about me.”^[6]

Aware of such an important mission, we want to do the same as those

early Christians. We turn to Mary, Queen of Apostles, to help us become effective heralds of Christ Jesus.

[1] Benedict XVI. *Jesus of Nazareth*, Vol. II, Ignatius Press, p. 269.

[2] Saint Josemaría, *Holy Rosary*, First Glorious Mystery.

[3] Francis, Homily, 29 March 2019.

[4] Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 120.

[5] Benedict XVI, Audience, 20 January 2010.

[6] Saint Josemaría, *Instruction*, 9 January 1935, no. 248.

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