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Commentary on the Gospel: "We have seen the Lord!"

Gospel for the 2nd Sunday of Easter (Cycle ABC), and commentary.

Gospel (*Jn 20:19-31*)

On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them,

“Peace be with you.”

When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again,

“Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I send you.”

And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and said to them,

“Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.”

Now Thomas, one of the twelve, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord.” But he said to them, “Unless I see in his hands the print of the nails, and place my finger in the mark of the nails, and place my hand in his side, I will not believe.”

Eight days later, his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. The doors were shut, but Jesus came and stood among them, and said,

“Peace be with you.” Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side; do not be faithless, but believing.”

Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God!”

Jesus said to him, “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe.”

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name.

Commentary

On Resurrection Sunday Jesus appears to his disciples, who were hiding out of fear. He wants to fill them with joy and send them out to announce the Good News as the Father had sent him. Our Lord shows them his glorious wounds as tangible proofs of his triumph. And he gives them peace: “This is not a greeting nor even a simple good wish,” Pope Francis said. “It is a gift, indeed, *the* precious gift that Christ offered his disciples after he had passed through death and hell. This peace is the fruit of the victory of God’s love over evil, it is the fruit of forgiveness.”[1]

The Gospel tells us that the disciple Thomas was not with the others on that occasion. When he returns he refuses to believe their joyous testimony: “We have seen the Lord!”

Perhaps he attributes it to a subjective experience or a collective delusion. Thomas demands more than just the apostolic witness and asks for clear evidence to believe and change his life. On the following Sunday, Jesus once again showed himself to them. “You too may find yourself now hearing his gentle reproach to Thomas: ‘Let me have your finger; see, here are my hands. Let me have your hand; put it into my side. Cease your doubting, and believe;’ and, with the Apostle, a sincere cry of contrition will rise from your soul: ‘My Lord, and my God!’ I acknowledge you once and for all as the Master. From now on, with your help, I shall always treasure your teachings and I shall strive to follow them loyally.”[2]

Today, Mercy Sunday, “as we enter, through Christ’s wounds, into the mystery of God,” Pope Francis said, “we come to realize that mercy is not

simply one of his qualities among others, but the very beating of his heart. Then, like Thomas, we no longer live as disciples who are uncertain, devout but wavering. We too fall in love with the Lord!”[3]

It is natural that we feel the need Thomas did to see and touch Jesus, since we know the world through our bodily senses. Therefore we can ask ourselves with the Pope: “How can we savour this love? How can we touch today with our hand the mercy of Jesus? Again, the Gospel offers a clue when it stresses that the very evening of Easter (cf. v. 19), soon after rising from the dead, Jesus begins by granting the Spirit for the forgiveness of sins. To experience love, we need to begin there: to let ourselves be forgiven.”[4]

We can also see as addressed to us the last beatitude pronounced by Jesus on earth, provoked by the

doubt of Thomas: “Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe.” Faith, trust in God without conclusive proofs, is a blessing, a gift we need to ask for with humility: “Increase our faith!” (*Lk 17:5*). It is a gift we need to foster and put into practice with our daily deeds, because “he who believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I go to the Father. Whatever you ask in my name, I will do it, that the Father may be glorified in the Son” (*Jn 14:12-14*). Saint Josemaria said: “God is the same as always. It is men of faith that are needed: and then, there will be a renewal of the wonders we read of in the Gospel.”[5]

[1] Pope Francis, *Regina Coeli*, 2nd Sunday of Easter 2013.

[2] Saint Josemaria, *Friends of God*, 145.

[3] Pope Francis, *Homily*, 2nd Sunday of Easter 2018.

[4] *Ibid.*

[5] Saint Josemaria, *The Way*, 586.

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