

Meditations: Easter Thursday

Some reflections that can help guide our prayer on Easter Thursday.

- “Peace” is the first word spoken by the Risen Christ
- Jesus restores hope to our lives
- The mission of spreading peace to all men and women

DURING THE OCTAVE of Easter, the Church’s liturgy reminds us of the chief appearances of the Risen Lord. They all have a common denominator: the disciples fail at first to recognise Jesus in the person

who appears before them and speaks to them. Their hearts are not prepared yet for this experience. Their surprise is so great that they are overwhelmed and confused.

This is what happens when Jesus appears to the apostles gathered in the Cenacle, as narrated by Saint Luke (*Lk 24:36-49*). The two disciples from Emmaus have returned to inform the others about what happened on their way home. When they arrive, they find the others talking about what Peter has seen, and about the news of the empty tomb. While they were talking about these things, *Jesus himself stood among them, and said to them, 'Peace to you!'* (*Lk 24:36*). It is significant that the first word our Lord pronounces after having conquered death is "peace." Peace is the first gift of the Risen Lord.^[1] Undoubtedly this was what the apostles most needed

to hear after all their fears during those days of betrayal and loneliness.

The prophet Isaiah announced that the Messiah would be the *Prince of Peace* (Is 9:6). The kingdom of Christ, Saint Paul tell us, is a kingdom of *peace and joy* (Rom 14:17). Both the prophet and the apostle, by divine inspiration, pointed to Christ's heart as the source of authentic peace. The Master himself had told his apostles in the Cenacle, just hours before his passion: *Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you* (Jn 14:27). At each Eucharistic celebration we hear Christ the High Priest once again telling us of his desire that "peace be with" us who are his disciples. "Jesus wants us, amid our daily comings and goings, to have genuine peace, serenity and rest. And he shows us the way: by identifying ourselves more and more with Him, with the humility and meekness of his heart."^[2]

THE APOSTLES' EYES were clouded by fear. They didn't recognise Jesus and thought He was a ghost. But our Lord insisted to them that his body was real: *See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself... And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet (Lk 24:39-40)*. Although they contemplated with wonder his Most Holy Humanity standing in front of them, they still couldn't bring themselves to believe, perhaps because of the surprise caused by such great joy. Therefore he adds, *Have you anything here to eat? (Lk 24:41-43)*. The living Jesus continues to show us his wounds and tells us, "It is I." When Christ's presence becomes blurred in our life, we can discover, through faith, that He hasn't left us. Human failures, setbacks, even our defects, when seen in the light streaming from the glorious wounds of the Risen Christ, no longer are a problem without

solution, nor can they easily take away our joy.

Thomas More wrote to his daughter from the Tower of London: “My own beloved daughter, do not let your mind be troubled over anything that shall happen to me in this world. Nothing can come but what God wills. And I am very sure that however bad it may seem, it shall indeed be the best.”^[3] — The hope of the Risen Jesus “plants in our hearts the conviction that God is able to make everything work unto good, because even from the grave he brings life. The grave is the place where no one who enters ever leaves. But Jesus emerged for us; he rose for us; to bring life where there was death, to begin a new story in the very place where a stone had been placed. He, who rolled away the stone that sealed the entrance of the tomb, can also remove the stones in our hearts.”^[4] —

OUR APOSTOLIC MISSION consists in bringing Christ's peace to those around us. When the seventy-two disciples were sent to the villages of Galilee, the message they were to take to each family was: *Peace be to this house!* (Lk 10:5). On Sunday night, Jesus sends them out to preach *repentance and forgiveness of sins ... in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem* (Lk 24:47-48). God wants the peace He gives us to reach the whole world. He has entrusted us with the mission of spreading it "in his name." As one of the Fathers of the Church said: "We should be ashamed of dispensing with the greeting of peace, which the Lord left us when He was about to leave this world. Peace is a savory word and reality, which we know comes from God."^[5] Ever since Jesus gave that mission to his disciples, peace will become a sign of Christian identity.

Let us then pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding (Rom 14:19), Saint Paul encouraged the Romans. In the effort of evangelisation, Christians imitate the actions of the Risen Lord, who shows his wounds to the disciples not as a reproach for abandoning Him, but rather to make them see where the true source of peace lies, in order to restore to them what they had lost. “Let us ask our Lord, in our prayer, to give us a heart like His. Then we will find ‘rest for our soul’ and for the persons close to us.”^[6] Saint Josemaría often prayed this short aspiration: *Cor Iesu sacratíssimum et miséricors, dona nobis pacem. “Most sacred and merciful heart of Jesus, grant us peace.”* In our yearning to spread God’s peace, we will find in Mary, Queen of Peace, a powerful intercessor.

^[1] Cf. San Paul VI, Audience, 9 April 1975.

[2] _____ Monsignor Fernando Ocariz,
Letter, 19 June 2020.

[3] _____ Saint Thomas More, Letter to his
daughter Margaret.

[4] _____ Francis, Homily, 11 April 2020.

[5] _____ Saint Gregory Nazianzen, in *Catena Aurea*, vol. VI, p. 545.

[6] _____ Monsignor Fernando Ocariz,
Letter, 19 June 2020.

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