

Meditations: Thursday of the Second Week of Easter

Some reflections that can assist our prayer during these days of the Easter season.

- The apostles launch out to evangelise
- Our mission in the world
- Christ brings light to our life and to human history

THE APOSTLES, after being freed from prison, returned at daybreak to the Temple to continue preaching. There they were once again arrested

and taken before the high priest and the council. The first reading for today's Mass relates what happened: *And the high priest questioned them, saying, 'We strictly charged you not to teach in this name, yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and you intend to bring this man's blood upon us.'* But Peter and the apostles answered, *'We must obey God rather than men'* (Acts 5:27-29).

“Peter and the twelve show that they possess the ‘obedience of faith’ that they will then try to bring about in all men (cf. *Rom 1:5*).”^[1] In the book of the Acts we see many clear examples of this. For the apostles, the most important thing is to carry out the mission entrusted to them by God. As witnesses of Christ’s resurrection, they cannot stop talking about what they have seen and heard. What they have received seems such a great treasure, and so

fills their hearts, that they will face any danger in order to share it.

The Holy Spirit was gradually transforming the apostles. They were growing less cowardly and more courageous by the day; they were becoming less ambitious, with less human outlook, and more capable of giving themselves to others.

Introduced into the life of the Spirit at Pentecost, “they are no longer men who are ‘alone.’ They experience the special synergy that leads them to no longer make themselves the center, and that enables them to say: *we and the Holy Spirit* (cf. *Acts 5:32*) and *to the Holy Spirit and us* (*Acts 15:28*).

They no longer feel capable of saying ‘I’ alone; they are ‘decentralised’ from themselves. Strengthened by this alliance, the apostles do not allow anyone to intimidate them.”^[2] —

THE GOD OF OUR FATHERS raised Jesus whom you killed by hanging him

on a tree. God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Saviour, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey him (Acts 5:30-32). The apostles knew that they were witnesses to a truth that brings salvation to the whole human race – with the assistance of the Holy Spirit who was sent so that they could make it part of their lives. This is the beginning of our own mission. The Church “continues and carries out throughout history the mission of Christ himself.”^[3]

“Faced with the challenges of this world of ours, which are both complex and exciting, what is our Lord expecting from us Christians today? He wants us to go out to meet people’s anxieties and needs, in order to bring the Gospel, in its original purity and radiant newness, to everyone”^[4] The call to evangelise

“summons each of us, with our spiritual resources, with our professional skills and life experiences, and also with our limitations and defects, to try and see how we can cooperate ever more effectively in the huge task of setting Christ at the summit of all human activities. To do this we need in-depth knowledge of the time we live in, its dynamics and potential, and also of the limitations and injustices, sometimes serious ones, that afflict it. Above all, we need personal union with Jesus in prayer and the Sacraments. Thus we will be able to remain open to the action of the Holy Spirit, in order to call, with charity, at the door of our contemporaries’ hearts.”^[5]

HE WHO COMES from above is above all; he who is of the earth belongs to the earth, and of the earth he speaks (Jn 3:31). This passage from the Gospel of Saint John follows right

after the conversation between the Baptist and his disciples, when the Precursor pronounces the words we have so often meditated on: *He must increase, but I must decrease (Jn 3:30)*. Christ, who comes from above, from heaven, is the only one who can reveal the Father and bring us the Holy Spirit. For *he who believes in the Son has eternal life; he who does not obey the Son shall not see life (Jn 3:36)*.

Only Christ can speak *the words of God* and *give the Spirit without measure (Jn 3:34)*. We can gain access to God in various ways: for example, by contemplating the order and beauty in the world; by reflecting on the yearning for the infinite and for happiness that lies deep in the human heart; by the experience of freedom and moral goodness, and the voice of our conscience... All these ways are evidence of the human person's openness to God, but

they also highlight the limitations of human knowledge in the face of the divine.

In contrast, by faith in Christ we can come to know the complete and definitive Word of God. As Saint Thomas Aquinas wrote, “Before Christ came, no philosopher, for all his efforts, could know as much about God and about what is necessary to attain eternal life as a little old woman can know through faith after Christ came.”^[6] Every Christian has received the wonderful gift of faith. As Benedict XVI said, “Faith is an encounter with the God who speaks and acts in history, and who transforms our daily life. He transforms our mentality, our value judgements, our decisions and practical actions. Faith is not an illusion, a flight from reality, a refuge for sentimentalism; rather it involves our whole life in proclaiming the

Gospel, the Good News that can set the whole person free.”^[7]

Let us ask Mary, Mother of believers, to help us to center our lives ever more fully on Christ and to guide towards Him all those we meet on our way.

^[1] Francis, General Audience, 18 September 2019.

^[2] Ibid.

^[3] Second Vatican Council, *Ad Gentes*, no. 2

^[4] Monsignor Fernando Ocáriz, *In the Light of the Gospel*, Kindle edition, no. 27, p 36.

^[5] Ibid.

^[6] Saint Thomas Aquinas, *On the Apostles' Creed, Preface*.

^[7] Benedict XVI, Audience, 14 November 2012.

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