Thursday in the Octave of Easter

Gospel text (*Lk* 24:35-48): The disciples of Jesus recounted what had taken place along the way, and how they had come to recognize him in the breaking of bread. While they were still speaking about this, he stood in their midst and said to them, “Peace be with you.” But they were startled and terrified and thought that they were seeing a ghost. Then he said to them, “Why are you troubled? And why do questions arise in your hearts? Look at my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me and see, because a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you can see I have.” And as he said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. While they were still incredulous for joy and were amazed, he asked them, “Have you anything here to eat?” They gave him a piece of baked fish; he took it and ate it in front of them.

He said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the law of Moses and in the prophets and psalms must be fulfilled.” Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures. And he said to them, “Thus it is written that the Messiah would suffer and rise from the dead on the third day and that repentance, for the forgiveness of sins, would be preached in his name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.”

“Peace be with you.”

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Today, the risen Christ meets His disciples again, with His desire of peace: “Peace be with you.” (Lk 24:36). This is how He makes the fears and forebodings the Apostles had accumulated during their days of passion and loneliness disappear.

He is not a ghost but totally real; at times, however, fright in our lives is taking shape as if it were the only reality possible. At times also, it is our lack of faith and of interior life which is changing things: fright becomes reality and Christ gradually vanishes from our life. The presence of Christ in our Christian life, instead, lightens up our existence, especially in those places no human explanation may account for. Saint Gregory of Nazianzen tells us: “We should be ashamed to dispense with the salutation of peace;

salutation the Lord left with us when He was going to leave this world. Peace is a name and a substantial thing emanating from God, as the Apostle Paul said to the Philippians: 'The peace of God'; and that it is from God is also shown when he tells the Ephesians: 'He is our peace'."

It is the resurrection of Christ which gives a meaning to all our mishaps and sufferings, which helps us to recover our peace of mind and calm us down in the darkness of our life. All other small lights we may find in our life are only meaningful under this Light.

In the Gospel we read: "Everything written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms had to be fulfilled... "; and again we read "He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures" (Lk 24:44-45), as He had already done with the disciples at Emmaus. The Lord also wants us to understand the meaning of the Scriptures for our life; He wants our poor heart to become a flaming heart, like His: with the explanation of the Scriptures and the chunk of bread, the Holy Eucharist. In other words: the Christian task is to see His story to become a story of salvation.

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- "O surpassing loving-kindness! Christ received nails in His undefiled hands and feet, and suffered anguish; while on me without pain or toil by the fellowship of His suffering He freely bestows salvation." (Saint Cyril of Jerusalem)

- "The content of Christian witness is not a theory but a message of salvation, a real event, rather a Person: it is the Risen Christ, the living and only Savior of all." (Francis)

- "In particular Jesus' redemptive death fulfils Isaiah's prophecy of the suffering Servant. Indeed Jesus himself explained the meaning of his life and death in the light of God's suffering Servant. After his Resurrection he gave this interpretation of the Scriptures to the disciples at Emmaus, and then to the apostles." (Catechism Of The Catholic Church, № 601)