Saturday in the Octave of Easter

Gospel text (*Mk* 16:9-15): When Jesus had risen, early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had driven seven demons. She went and told his companions who were mourning and weeping. When they heard that he was alive and had been seen by her, they did not believe. After this he appeared in another form to two of them walking along on their way to the country. They returned and told the others; but they did not believe them either. [But] later, as the eleven were at table, he appeared to them and rebuked them for their unbelief and hardness of heart because they had not believed those who saw him after he had been raised. He said to them, "Go into the whole world and proclaim the gospel to every creature."

"Go into the whole world and proclaim the gospel to every creature"

Fr. Jacques PHILIPPE
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Today, relying on the risen Jesus, we must rediscover the Gospel as the "Good News". The Gospel is not a law that tyrannizes us. Occasionally, we may have fallen into the temptation of thinking that non-Christians are more relaxed than us and do what they want, whereas we have to abide by a list of commandments. This is a merely superficial view of things.

Personally, one of my biggest concerns is that the Gospel may always be presented as good news, happy news that fills our hearts with joy and consolation.

The teaching of Jesus is certainly demanding, but Thérèse of the Child Jesus helps us to really perceive it as good news, since for her the Gospel is the revelation of God's tenderness, of God's mercy with each one of His children, and it points out the laws of life that lead to happiness. The center of Christian life is to welcome with appreciation the kindness and the goodness of God - revelation of His merciful love - and allow us to be transformed by this love.

The spiritual journey taken by Saint Thérèse, the "Little Way", is an authentic way of holiness, a path with room for all, made in such a way that no one can get discouraged — neither the humblest, nor the poorest, nor the sinner. Thus, Thérèse anticipates the Vatican II Council that strongly affirms that holiness is not an exceptional way, but a call to all Christians from which nobody should be excluded. Even the most vulnerable and lowly among us can respond to the call to holiness.

This Holiness consists of a “way all about confidence and love.” Thus, “it is your arms, Jesus, which are the lift to carry me to Heaven (...). You, my God, have exceeded my hope, and I would like to sing your mercies” (St. Thérèse of Lisieux).

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “‘You are the salt of the earth’. Implying, ‘It is not for your own sake, he says, but for the world’s sake that the word is entrusted to you. I am not sending you only into two cities only or ten to twenty, not to a single nation, as I sent the prophets of old, but across land and sea, to the whole world. And that world is in a miserable state.” (Saint John Chrysostom)

- “If you do not become his witnesses in your daily lives, who will do so in your place? Christians are, in the Church and with the Church, missionaries of Christ sent into the world.” (Benedict XVI)

- “Those who with God's help have welcomed Christ's call and freely responded to it are urged on by love of Christ to proclaim the Good News everywhere in the world (...).” (Catechism Of The Catholic Church, Nº 3)

Other comments

“Mary Magdalene went and told his companions, they did not believe”

Fr. Raimondo M. SORGIA Mannai OP
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Today, the Gospel offers us the opportunity to meditate upon some aspects which each one of us has experience with: we are certain of our love for Jesus, and we consider Him the best of our friends; nevertheless, who, among us, could be sure of having never betrayed Him? Let us recall whether we have never ever traded Him for some gaudy illusion of ours? In the second place, though we are often tempted to overrate ourselves as Christians, the testimony of our own conscience forces us nonetheless to remain silent and humiliate ourselves, imitating the publican who, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying ‘O God, be merciful to me a sinner.’ (Lk 18:13).

This being said, we should not be surprised to see the disciples' behavior. They have personally known Jesus, they have witnessed His mind and heart capacities, the unmatched qualities of His preaching. However, when Jesus Christ had already risen, one of the women of the group —Mary of Magdala— “went and told his companions who were mourning and weeping” (Mk 16:10) and, instead of stopping their tear shedding and starting to dance in joy, they do not believe her. This is the evidence that the earth is the center of our gravity.

The disciples had before them the hitherto unheard of announcement of the Resurrection, and yet, they chose to keep on lamenting in deep sorrow. We have sinned, yes! We have betrayed Him, yes! We have celebrated some kind of pagan funeral rite, yes! From now on, it will never be again: after having beaten our chest, let us throw ourselves to His feet, our head well lifted unto heaven and... carry on!, let us get going behind Him, keeping His pace. French writer Gustave Flaubert has wisely said: “I think that if we kept on looking at the sky without stopping we should end up by developing wings.” As of today and forever more, man who was submerged in sin, ignorance or in half-heartedness, must know that, thanks to the Resurrection of Christ, “he finds himself immersed in bright daylight.”