Tuesday of the Sixth Week of Easter

Gospel text (*Jn* 16:5-11): Jesus said to his disciples: “Now I am going to the one who sent me, and not one of you asks me, ‘Where are you going?’ But because I told you this, grief has filled your hearts. But I tell you the truth, it is better for you that I go. For if I do not go, the Advocate will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you. And when he comes he will convict the world in regard to sin and righteousness and condemnation: sin, because they do not believe in me; righteousness, because I am going to the Father and you will no longer see me; condemnation, because the ruler of this world has been condemned.”

"It is better for you that I go"

Fr. Joseph A. PELLEGRINO
(Tarpon Springs, Florida, United States)

Today, we are presented with a deeper understanding of the reality of the Ascension of the Lord. In the reading from the Gospel of John on Easter Sunday, Mary of Magdala is told not to cling to the Lord because “I have not yet ascended to the Father” (Jn 20:17). In today's Gospel Jesus notes that the disciples are overcome: “because I told you this, grief has filled your hearts. But I tell you the truth, it is better for you that I go” (Jn 16:6-7). Jesus must ascend to the Father. Yet, He still remains with us.

How can He go, yet still remain? This mystery was explained by our Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI: «Given that God embraces and sustains the whole cosmos, the Lord's Ascension means that Christ has not gone far away from us, but now, thanks to the fact

that He is with the Father, He is close to each one of us forever».

Our hope is in Jesus Christ; His conquest of death gave us the life that death can never destroy, His Life. His resurrection is the verification that the spiritual is real. Nothing can separate us from the love of God. Nothing can diminish our hope. The negatives of the world cannot destroy the positive of Jesus Christ.

The imperfect world we live in, a world where the innocent suffer, can point us to pessimism. But Jesus Christ has transformed us into eternal optimists.

The living presence of the Lord in our community, in our families, in those aspects of our society that can rightfully be called “Christian” have given us a reason for hope. The Living Presence of the Lord within each one of us has given us joy. No matter how great the barrage of negatives that the media delights in presenting, the positives of the world far outweigh the negatives, for Jesus Christ has risen.

He ascended, but He has not left us.

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “Who on hearing the titles of the Spirit is not lifted up in soul, who does not raise his conception to the supreme nature? It is called ‘right Spirit’, ‘a leading Spirit’, ‘Holy Spirit’” (Saint Basil the Great)

- “The Holy Spirit makes us sons and daughters of God. He involves us in the same responsibility that God has for his world, for the whole of humanity. He teaches us to look at the world, others and ourselves with God's eyes” (Benedict XVI)

- “Since Easter, the Holy Spirit has proved ‘the world wrong about sin’ (Jn 16:8-9) i.e., proved that the world has not believed in him whom the Father has sent. But this same Spirit who brings sin to light is also the Consoler who gives the human heart grace for repentance and conversion” (Catechism Of The Catholic Church, Nº 1433)

Other comments

“It is better for you that I go”

Fr. Lluís ROQUÉ i Roqué
(Manresa, Barcelona, Spain)

Today, we contemplate another farewell by Jesus, necessary for the setting up of His Kingdom. There is, however, a promise included therein: “For if I do not go, the Advocate will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you” (Jn 16:7).

A promise come true in a most striking way in Whitsun Day, ten days after Jesus ascended into Heaven. In addition to removing all sadness from the Apostles' hearts and from those gathered around the Virgin Mary, Mother of Jesus (cf. Acts 1:13-14) that day, so much confirms and strengthens their faith, that “And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in different tongues, as the Spirit enabled them to proclaim” (Acts 2:4).

A fact that, throughout centuries, “becomes present” through the only one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church, inasmuch as, by the action of the same promised Spirit, it is announced, everywhere and to everybody, that Jesus of Nazareth —God's Son, born of the Virgin Mary, who was crucified, suffered, died and was buried— truly resurrected and is seated in glory at the right hand of the Father (cf. Creed) and is living among ourselves. His Spirit lives in us through Baptism, making us sons in the Son, reaffirming His presence in each one of us through the sacrament of Confirmation. All this, to carry out our vocation towards sanctity and to reinforce our mission to bring others closer to God, too.

Thus, thanks to the Father's will, to the Son's redemption and to the constant action of the Holy Spirit, we can all respond in faithfulness to that call, by becoming saints; and, with a bold apostolic charity, without any exclusivity, carry out the mission to a good end, proposing and helping others towards sanctity, too.

And as the first ones did —as the ever faithful ones did— with Mary, we pray, and trusting that the Helper will come again in glory and that there will be a new Pentecost, we say: “Send forth your Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your Love” (Pentecost Alleluia).