Friday of the Twenty-fourth Week in Ordinary Time

Gospel text (*Lk* 8:1-3): Jesus journeyed from one town and village to another, preaching and proclaiming the good news of the Kingdom of God. Accompanying him were the Twelve and some women who had been cured of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, Joanna, the wife of Herod's steward Chuza, Susanna, and many others who provided for them out of their resources.

"Accompanying him were the Twelve and some women"

Cardinal Raniero CANTALAMESSA
(Città del Vaticano, Vatican)

Today we admire the women who followed Jesus for who He was, out of gratitude for the good they had received from Him ("they had been cured of evil spirits and infirmities"). They did not follow him in the hope of making a career for themselves later. This is one of the surest signs of the honesty and historical credibility of the Gospels: the insignificant role played in them by the authors and inspirers of the Gospels, and the wonderful role they show played by the women.

Their presence alongside the Crucified and the Risen One contains a vital lesson for us today. Our civilization, dominated by technology, needs a heart for man to survive within it without becoming totally dehumanized. We must give more space to the reasons of the heart if we are to prevent our planet from spiritually collapsing into an ice age.

It's not difficult to understand why we are so eager to increase our knowledge and so reluctant to increase our capacity to love: knowledge automatically translates into power, love into service: "Knowledge inflates with pride, but love builds up" (1 Cor 8:1).

In fact, no woman was involved, even indirectly, in the condemnation of Jesus Christ. Even the only pagan woman mentioned in the narratives, Pilate's wife, dissociated herself from his condemnation (cf. Mt 27:19). It is true that Jesus also died for the sins of the women, but historically only they can truly say: We are "innocent of this man's blood" (Mt 27:24).

We have always wondered why these pious women were the first to see the Risen One and why they were entrusted with the mission of announcing him to the apostles. The true answer is this: the women were the first to see the Risen One because they had been the last to abandon him when He died, and even after his death, they went to his tomb to bring spices. (cf. Mk 16:1).

With them was Saint Mary: mothers do not abandon a child, even one condemned to death.

(From the sermon on Good Friday 2007, in St. Peter's Basilica)

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “It is better for a man to confess of his sins than to harden his heart.” (Saint Clement of Rome)
- “In contrast to the contemporary Jewish custom, by which women were viewed as being secondary status, Christ achieved something like an emancipation of women.” (Benedict XVI)
- “From the very beginning of the Church there were men and women who set out to follow Christ with greater liberty, and to imitate him more closely, by practicing the evangelical counsels. They led lives dedicated to God, each in his own way (...)” (Catechism Of The Catholic Church, Nº 918)

Other comments

"Jesus journeyed from one town and village to another, preaching and proclaiming the good news of the Kingdom of God"

Fr. Jordi PASCUAL i Bancells
(Salt, Girona, Spain)

Today, in the Gospel, we can appreciate what a normal day in the three years of Jesus' public life should have been. St. Luke explains it in a few words: “Jesus journeyed from one town and village to another, preaching and proclaiming the good news of the Kingdom of God” (Lk 8:1). This is what we contemplate in the third Mystery of Light of the Holy Rosary.

While commenting this mystery His Holiness St. John Paul II says: “Another mystery of light is the preaching by which Jesus proclaims the coming of the Kingdom of God, calls to conversion and forgives the sins of all who draw near to him in humble trust: the inauguration of that ministry of mercy which he continues to exercise until the end of the world, particularly through the Sacrament of Reconciliation which he has entrusted to his Church.”

Jesus keeps on passing by close to us and offering us His supernatural goods: when we pray; when we read and ponder over the Gospel, to know and love Him better and imitate His life; when we receive a sacrament, especially the Eucharist and the Penance; when we devote ourselves with effort and perseverance to our every day’s chores; when we have to deal with our family, our friends or our neighbors; when we help that person who is in need of material or spiritual help; when we have a rest or

amuse ourselves... In all those circumstances we may find Jesus and follow Him just as those Twelve and those saintly women also did.

But, above all, each one of us is called by God to also be “the passing Jesus”, that is, to speak to those we deal with —with our deeds and our words— about the faith that fills our existence with meaning, about the hope that impels us to go on forward through the paths of life designed by God, and about the charity that should guide all our acts.

The first one to follow Jesus and “to be Jesus” is Mary. That with her example and mediation she may help us!