

III SUNDAY AFTER EASTER - 15th April 2018

THUS IT IS WRITTEN, THAT JESUS SHOULD SUFFER AND ON THE THIRD DAY RISE FROM THE DEAD - Biblical Commentary by Father Alberto Maggi OSM

Luke 24, 35-48

Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he was known to them in the breaking of the bread.

As they were talking about these things, Jesus himself stood among them, and said to them, "Peace to you!" But they were startled and frightened and thought they saw a spirit. And he said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me, and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have." And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. And while they still disbelieved for joy and were marvelling, he said to them, "Have you anything here to eat?" They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate before them.

Then 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 the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.

For the community the word and the bread is the time for a meeting with the Risen Christ. And what the evangelist Luke writes for us in the last chapter of his Gospel, is that of Jesus' meeting with his disciples at Emmaus of which we see now the last words.

They are the disciples of Emmaus, they have returned from Jerusalem, they are gathered with the rest of the community and tell of the experience they have had and how they recognised Jesus in the breaking of the bread. Luke is the only evangelist that in the last supper, after Jesus had taken the bread and broken the bread and given it to his disciples added the words "Do this in remembrance of me." It is in the breaking of the bread that the presence of Christ manifests himself, it is the meaning of the Eucharist. Jesus, the son of God, becomes bread, food of life because those that welcome him and are able themselves to become bread breaking their lives for others making the experience of the risen Christ and having themselves the fullness of the divine condition.

"As they were talking..." writes the evangelist "...Jesus himself stood among them,"

This was the characteristic of Jesus' manifestations. Jesus manifested himself in the centre of the community, not in front nor above, which would mean a hierarchy of importance of the

people closest to him, but Jesus is at the centre and from there he does not absorb the energy of man, but he communicates his energy to his followers.

Then he says "*Peace to you!*" this is not a greeting nor an invitation. Jesus' peace to you, is a gift. When Jesus manifests himself his first action is a gift of the fullness of life. We know that the Jewish word "shalom" means everything that contributes to the good and well-being of a person. But the disciples, writes the evangelist, are "*..startled and frightened..*" because "*..they thought they saw a spirit.*" The translation is not ghost, but spirit. Why? For them death was the end of everything and they could not believe that a person could pass unharmed through death. Then it is Jesus who must encourage them and Jesus invites them not only to look at him, but also to touch him. He shows them his hands and feet, it is the same Jesus that they had known, but with a characteristic, he says "*.. it is I .*" literally "I am", it is the divine name. Jesus wants to make his disciples understand that death not only did not interrupt his existence, but now he manifests himself in the fullness of the divine condition.

But they are reluctant to believe this and Jesus must even invite them to eat, to give to him something to eat and "*They gave him..*" writes Luke "*...a piece of broiled fish,*" fish and bread reminds us of the dividing of the fishes that anticipated the meaning of the Eucharist. Once again it is in the generous sharing of what one is and what one has that one experiences the presence of the Lord.

The disciples believe that Jesus is a spirit, but Jesus manifests himself as a person that has the divine condition. This does not cancel the physicality, but expands it and transfigures it. Saint Paul in his letters will speak of the spiritual body. So it is the real and true Jesus, who manifests himself to his own.

Then Jesus remembers the words that he had said, but that his disciples had not understood. saying "*..while I was still with you,..*" but Jesus is still with them, only in a different way, more intense "*..that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms...*" This division of what is sacred scripture, all the sacred scriptures spoke of him. Of what do the holy scriptures speak? Of the Creator's project on humanity that is fully realised in Jesus. But to understand this the evangelist writes "*.. he opened their minds..*" A closed mind can not understand this novelty. Therefore Jesus' task is to open their minds. Saint Paul will say that it is as if there was a veil over the scripture and this veil disappears through Jesus. What does this mean? The scriptures must be interpreted in the same spirit that inspired them. And what is this spirit? The love of the Creator for his creatures.

And then Jesus' final mandate that links up at the beginning of the Gospel with the preaching of John the Baptist, but taking away the fact of the baptism. In fact Jesus' last words are the instructions that he gives to his disciples "*...that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations*", meaning all the gentile populations, therefore Jesus' message is for all humanity. Repentance means a radical change of one's life, to not live anymore for oneself, but to live for others "*..for the forgiveness..*" It is the repentance that cancels, here the phrase forgiveness of sins, for sins are not those that man commits, but the wrong direction of one's live that regards the past. Therefore Jesus assures that those that change direction in their lives, living no more for themselves but living for others, their past is completely cancelled.

Then there is the final shock that Luke writes "*...beginning from Jerusalem.*" Jesus sends them to the gentile population, but the first place in this gentile population that must be converted is Jerusalem it is the seat of the religious institutions that most need of conversion to Jesus' gospel.

