

III SUNDAY OF EASTER– 26th April 2020

HE TOOK THE BREAD AND BLESSED AND BROKE IT....AND THEY RECOGNISED HIM. - Biblical Commentary by Father . Alberto Maggi OSM

Luke 24,13-35

That very day two of them were going to a village named Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and they were talking with each other about all these things that had happened. While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them. But their eyes were kept from recognizing him. And he said to them, "What is this conversation that you are holding with each other as you walk?" And they stood still, looking sad. Then one of them, named Cleopas, answered him, "Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?" And he said to them, "What things?" And they said to him, "Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, a man who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things happened. Moreover, some women of our company amazed us. They were at the tomb early in the morning, and when they did not find his body, they came back saying that they had even seen a vision of angels, who said that he was alive. Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see." And he said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.

So they drew near to the village to which they were going. He acted as if he were going farther, but they urged him strongly, saying, "Stay with us, for it is toward evening and the day is now far spent." So he went in to stay with them. When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them. And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And he vanished from their sight. They said to each other, "Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?" And they rose that same hour and returned to Jerusalem. And they found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together, saying, "The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!" Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he was known to them in the breaking of the bread.

Jesus' death caused dispersion and confusion in the group of disciples. The women go to search for him where he is not, in the sepulcher, and they find two men who say to them: "*Why do you look for the living among the dead?*". Instead the disciples, remain in the past, in a glorious place in Israel that reminds them of the great victory of Israel over the gentiles. Let's see what the evangelist Luke writes for us in chapter 24, from verse 13.

"That very day .." the day of the resurrection " ..two of them were going to a village named Emmaus" they are the apostles, the last reference was to the apostles. Why do they go to Emmaus? Emmaus is famous in the history of Israel, we find it in Maccabees 1 4,11 for a battle that Judas the

Maccabeus waged against the gentiles, defeating them; it was a great victory and, as it is written in this first book of the Maccabees, “ *Then all the Gentiles will know that there is one who redeems and saves Israel.* ” The messiah, who was expected, was the one who was supposed to redeem and save Israel and instead Jesus was defeated, he was a great disappointment. From the Gospels it seems to emerge that the disciples are more disappointed in Jesus' resurrection than in his death, because if Jesus had simply died, it meant that they had been wrong. At that time many false messiah arose, just think Judas the Galileo, Teuda, who created groups of followers, who fought against the Romans, that always ended in a massacre. Well, one messiah died, another was expected. But, if Jesus is resurrected, it means that all their dreams of glory, the restoration, the liberation of Israel, and the dominance over the Romans, all this ends.

Let's see the test. So, on the road to Emmaus “*While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them.*” Jesus is the shepherd who does not abandon his disciples. But, writes the evangelist, “ *But their eyes were kept from recognizing him.* ” How come the eyes of these disciples are prevented from recognizing him? It is clear, they look towards the past and cannot see the present and the future, where Jesus leads them. And “*.. he said to them, “What is this conversation that you are holding with each other as you walk?” And they stood still, looking sad. Then one of them, named Cleopas, answered him,..*” Cleopa is the abbreviation of Cleópatros, which means "of the glorious father, of the illustrious father", which makes one understand the attitude, the feeling of these disciples, they seek the glory of their people. And this Clèopa is amazed and says: “*Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem...*” and tells him about Jesus the Nazarene. For them Jesus was the Nazarene; Nazzareno meant "*The rebel, the revolutionary*". This is what they had believed to follow: a messiah who would defeat the Romans. And here's the disappointment, *and how our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, ...*” It is grave that these disciples, these apostles, define our authorities as those who have murdered their master. And here's the disappointment we mentioned earlier: “*... we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel.*” Here is the great disappointment: they hoped in the messiah, instead he died, and the proof that Jesus was not the messiah is that he died, because the messiah could not have died, and therefore the disappointment of the community that had placed all his hopes in Jesus.

He says: it is true that some women went to the sepulcher, “*..they came back saying that they had even seen a vision of angels, who said that he was alive.*” but, reluctantly, they did not believe in women, because women are not credible witnesses. And here is Jesus' response to this unbelief; is an answer that translates into a reproach, “*O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary..*” the word necessary, meaning literally had to, indicates the will of God that Christ suffered these sufferings – “*And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.*”- This verb "interpret" is important: it is the verb from which the technical term hermeneutics comes from. What is hermeneutics? It is the art or technique of interpreting texts. Jesus is not limited to read the texts of Moses or the prophets or to tell them, but he interprets them. What does this mean? This is a valid criterion for all of us today, (it means) that, to read the Scriptures, one must interpret it, how? With the same spirit that inspired it. And what is this spirit that inspired the scriptures : The love of the creator for all his creatures: this is the only criterion that allows you to understand scriptures.

“So they drew near to the village..” the village is always a place of tradition, of the past, so they still don't understand, they want to stay with the past - Jesus seems to want to go further. They stay with the old and Jesus, instead to the new. The disciples insist on Jesus *“Stay with us, for it is toward evening...”* and Jesus the shepherd, to not loose his sheep, stays with them.

“When he was at table with them, he took the bread..” and here the evangelist offers us the scene of the last supper, with the same gestures and actions, *“.. and blessed and broke it and gave it to them.”* To understand this passage, remember that Luke is the only evangelist who, at the time of the supper says that Jesus pronounces the words *“do this in memory of me”*. So Jesus repeats his presence, his memory.

“And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him.” that's when Jesus manifests himself as the one who breaks the bread, his own life for his disciples, they, the disciples, recognize him. *“And he vanished from their sight.”* Why does Jesus make himself invisible to them? The evangelist tells us, at the end of this passage, *“..he opened to us the Scriptures”* – then they returned to Jerusalem *“Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he was known to them in the breaking of the bread.”* This is the message that Luke, the evangelist, leaves for the communities and believers of all times: Jesus is invisible, because he makes himself visible every time the community breaks the bread.