

WHY DO YOU SEEK THE LIVING AMONG THE DEAD? - Biblical commentary by Father Alberto Maggi OSM

Luke 24,1-12

But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they went to the tomb, taking the spices they had prepared. And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they went in they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men stood by them in dazzling apparel. And as they were frightened and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, "Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise."

And they remembered his words, and returning from the tomb they told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest. Now it was Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James and the other women with them who told these things to the apostles, but these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. But Peter rose and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; and he went home marvelling at what had happened.

Chapter 24 is where the evangelist describes for us Jesus' resurrection and its impact on his disciples and their difficulty in understanding. But chapter 23 ended with this phrase: "*On the Sabbath they rested according to the commandment.*" It was the women that went to the tomb to see where Jesus was buried, but they do not proceed to the anointing and embalming of Jesus because it is already Saturday. And on Saturday no work must be done.

The evangelist reveals how the communities face the difficulty of abandoning the old, they still observe the commandment to rest on the Sabbath, to open themselves to the novelty that Jesus brings. Observing the laws prevents the experience of the Risen Christ. The evangelist writes in chapter 24, "*..on the first day of the week,*" This first day recalls the first day of the creation. It is a new creation, where man has a life that is able to suppurate death.

"..at early dawn, they went to the tomb, taking the spices they had prepared." The day before, the Sabbath they were unable to do anything because of the observance of the commandment. "*And they*

found the stone rolled away from the tomb,.” The evangelist does not specify the how. *“..but when they went in they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.”* It is clear that they do not find the body of Lord Jesus because they are searching in the only place where he is not to be found. Jesus is the living, the life giving and cannot be in the reign of the dead, in the place of the dead.

“While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men stood by them..” These two men we have already seen in the episode of the transfiguration. They were Moses and Elijah; it is a technique of the evangelist Luke to only nominate the first appearance. So, they are Moses and Elijah.

“..stood by them in dazzling apparel.” As in the transfiguration. *“ And as they were frightened and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them,”* What the evangelist writes for the reply of these personages is a very great truth of faith that regards not only the Risen Christ, but regards the lives of all believers and their impact with death. *“Why do you seek the living among the dead?”* The tomb is the last place where they would find Jesus. If one believes that death, not only does it not interrupt , but permits the individual to enter into a different condition, full and definite, the sepulcher, the tomb is the last place where he could be found.

When a person dear dies, even if it is painful, one has to choose whether to cry as one dead or experience as one alive. If you cry for the dead you go to the tomb, but he is not there, you must think of him as alive. Here then is the warning of these two. *“Why do you seek the living among the dead?”* You cannot search amongst the dead for the one that continues to live.

“He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee,” they remind the women and the disciples of Jesus’ teaching. *“... that the Son of Man must be delivered..”* This term in Greek indicates God’s will . it is not the Messiah, but the Son of Man, that is the man that has reached the divine condition, that is not a characteristic exclusive to Jesus, but possible for all they that follow him. And here the evangelist puts an tremendous accusation against the priestly caste in power.

“ the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men ...” In **Galilee** when Jesus announced his death, he had said; *“ The Son of Man is about to be delivered into the hands of men.”* (Luke 9,44) - that is the members of the Sanhedrin, the great judicial organization of Israel, from the high priests to the scribes, *“..and be crucified and on the third day rise.”*

Those that Jesus had referred to as the members of the Sanhedrin, now for these two characters they are sinners. People that considered themselves nearest to God, the farthest from the world of sin, in reality these are the sinners, because they have killed life, acted against life.

“And they remembered his words...” Remembering in the sense of understanding. *“..and returning from the tomb they told all these things to the eleven...”*. They are not twelve anymore ,the number will not be reconstructed. *“..and to all the rest. Now it was Mary Magdalene..”* who the evangelist had presented as the woman from which seven demons came out, *“...and Joanna,,”* the wife of Herod’s finance collector, *“... and Mary the mother of James and the other women with them who told these things to the apostles,”*

Here is the reaction of the disciples *“..these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them.”* Why? Because the women are not credible as testimonies. According to the Jewish tradition God had never spoken to a woman, It 's true, he had spoken to a woman, Sara, but as she replied with a lie, a harmless lie, from that moment on God had never spoken to a woman.

And for Sara' lie the women were believed to be unreliable testimonies. So the announcement of Jesus' resurrection was made by people not credible .” *But Peter rose and ran to the tomb;...”* it had just said that in the place of the dead Jesus would not be found, but Peter still does not understand and runs to the tomb.

“...stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; and he went home marvelling at what had happened.” The belief that Jesus is risen does not come from going the an empty tomb, but to meet a living person. And he meets the living person, and then the evangelist will continue in the next episode of Emmaus, when Jesus breaks the bread. When sharing one's life for others, it is there the possibility to experience he who is risen.