

### III SUNDAY AFTER EASTER– 30th APRIL 2017

#### HE WAS KNOWN TO THEM IN THE BREAKING OF THE BREAD - 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 has caused the dispersion and confusion in the group of the disciples. The women go to search of the Lord in the tomb where he is not, and find two men that say to them: "Why do you seek the living among the dead?" (Luke 24 ,5 ) The disciples talk of history and the past in a glorious place of Israel that reminds them of their great victory over the gentile population. Let's see what the evangelist Luke writes in chapter 24, from verse 13.

*"That very day... " the day of the resurrection, "... two of them.. " they are the apostles "... were going to a village named Emmaus.." why do they go to Emmaus ? Emmaus is well known in Israel's history. The first indication is in the book of Maccabee, (3, 57) for Judas the Maccabee's battle against the gentiles, defeating them. It was a great victory and as is written, " Then all the Gentiles will know that there is ONE who saves and liberates Israel, " ( 4,11 )*

The Messiah, who had been expected, was he who should have redeemed and saved Israel, but Jesus was defeated he had been a great delusion. From the gospel it emerges that the disciples were more

disappointed in the resurrection of Jesus than his death, because if he had simply died, it meant that they had been mistaken. There were so many pseudo-Messiahs at that time, just think of Judas the Galilean, Teuda, who created followers that turned against the Romans, and always ended up in a massacre. Well, if one Messiah died, another was waiting in the wings. But if Jesus is resurrected, it means that all of their dreams of glory, of restoration, of Israel's liberation, of domination over the Romans, all this was going to end.

But let's see the reading. So they are on their way to Emmaus and *"While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them."* Jesus is the shepherd that has not abandoned his disciples. But the evangelist writes *"But their eyes were kept from recognizing him"* Why are the disciples eyes unable to recognise Jesus? It's clear, they look to the past and cannot see the present and the future, where Jesus will lead 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,..."* It is the abbreviation of Cleópatros, which means "of the glorious or illustrious father", which helps to understand the attitude and the sentiments of these disciples, they seek the glory of their people. And this Clèopa says astonished *"Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?"* and they tell him of what happened to Jesus the Nazarene. Here, Jesus is the Nazarene, Nazarene means rebellious, revolutionary, it is what they had believed they were following: a Messiah who would defeat the Romans. And here is the disillusion *"..how our chief priests and rulers..."* It is serious that these disciples, and apostles, define our authorities as those who have murdered their master. And here's the disillusion mentioned earlier: *"..we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel."* Here is the great disillusion: they hoped in the Messiah, but he is dead and it is the proof that Jesus was not the Messiah, because the Messiah could not die and therefore the disappointment of the community that had all their hopes in Jesus.

He says: it is true that some women went to the tomb *"...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."* But, reluctantly they claimed that they did not believe the women, because women are not credible witnesses. And here is the answer of Jesus in the face of this disbelief, it is an answer that results in reproach, *"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." This verb "interpret" is important : (from the Greek hermēneutikos - expert in interpretation) from which comes the hermeneutical technical term, It is the art or the technique to interpret the texts, especially Biblical texts.

Jesus does not just read the texts of Moses or the prophets, or tell them, but he interprets them. What does this mean? This is a valid criterion for all of us today, meaning that, in order to read Scripture, how should we interpret it? With the same spirit that inspired it, and what is this spirit that inspired the Scripture? The creator's love for all his creatures: this is the only criterion that allows us to understand the Scripture.

*"..they drew near to the village to which they were going."* The village is always a place of tradition, the past, therefore they still do not understand, they go towards the past. Jesus wants them to go further, but they go towards the old and Jesus towards the new. The disciples insist with Jesus *"...saying, "Stay with us, for it is toward evening and the day is now far spent."* Jesus, the shepherd that does not lose his sheep, stays with them.

*"When he was at table with them, he took the bread."* Here the evangelist gives us the scene of the Last Supper, with the same gestures and actions. *"..and blessed and broke it and gave it to them."* Remember that Jesus at the moment of the breaking of the bread in the Last supper said *"Do this in remembrance of me."* (Luke 22,19) Therefore Jesus repeats for his presence and his memory.

*"And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him"* in the moment that Jesus manifests himself as he breaks the bread, dividing his own life for his disciples, then they, the disciples recognise him *"And he vanished from their sight."* he is no longer there but here vanish means invisible. The evangelist tells us at the end of the reading. The disciples return to Jerusalem and *found the eleven and "told what had happened on the road, and how he was known to them in the breaking of the bread."* This message that the evangelist Luke, leaves for the community and for the believers for all time: Jesus is invisible, but makes himself visible every time the community breaks bread.

