

**EASTER SUNDAY– 4h April 2021**

**HE TOOK THE BREAD AND BLESSED AND BROKE IT.....AND THEY RECOGNIZED 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 confuses and causes the dispersion of his disciples, who go, as if lost, in search of him, but in the wrong places; why? The women go to the tomb, but at the tomb they find the way blocked by two angels, who asked them "*Why do you seek the living among the dead*" (v. 5) and the disciples go to Emmaus, why Emmaus?. Because Emmaus was the site of a battle that took place about two centuries earlier, in which Judas the Maccabee, the national hero, had defeated the gentiles and was the place that commemorated the ransom, the liberation of the people. They therefore look for Jesus in the wrong places, either in the tomb or in the past. This is the passage that the liturgy presents to us on this Easter Sunday, it is Luke's gospel chapter 24.

Jesus approaches them, the evangelist writes, "*But their eyes were kept from recognizing him?*" Why? Those who look to the past cannot perceive the presence of Jesus in the present and Jesus talks to them and there is so much disappointment from them. It almost seems that the community is more disappointed in the resurrection of Jesus than in his death, because if Jesus had died, never mind, we were wrong, at that time he occasionally raised someone up, he said he was the Messiah, people followed him, and it ended up in a bloodbath. Let's just wait for another one because the Messiah cannot die, if he dies he is not the Messiah. . But if Jesus is risen, goodbye Israel's glorious dreams of the restoration because, as this Cléopas says "*..we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel.*" Although Jesus all his life had taught and talked about the kingdom of God, nothing remains . They are, blinded by religious nationalism, thinking of the kingdom of Israel and therefore there is misunderstanding.

Then Jesus has to review the biblical history a little bit and he does not just read the texts, but interprets them. Why? To understand sacred scripture it is necessary to interpret it with the same Spirit that inspired it, which is the Creator's unconditional love for his creatures, only in this way can it be understood. And when they are close to a village they ask Jesus to stay with them and Jesus does not abandon his disciples, even if they go in the wrong direction, he stays with them and here is the important moment which is the announcement of Easter, how to recognize the presence of the Risen One within the community. And the evangelist repeats the scene with the same words of the Last Supper.

Luke writes "*When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them.*" the same gestures and the same words he made at the last supper. And at the Last Supper, Luke had used Jesus' comment "*Do this in memory of me*" Then the memory is now rekindled; the evangelist writes

*"And their eyes were opened and they recognized him"*. Jesus is recognized in the breaking of bread, in the generous gift of his own life.

And here the evangelist writes *"And he vanished from their sight."* Jesus is invisible because he makes himself visible in the breaking of the bread. Where there is a community that generously shares what it is and what it has, in the breaking bread, there, the presence of the risen Christ is manifested.