

3rd Sunday of Easter (B)  
(Acts 3:13-15. 17-19 / Luke 24:35-48)  
19.04.2015

Dear brothers and sisters,

1. Today's gospel draws our attention to the fact that it is possible **to meet with the Risen Lord and not recognize Him**. This is what happened to the disciples who although in presence of the Risen Lord "thought they were seeing a ghost". The reason for their non-recognition was that the body of the Risen Lord at one and the same time resembled and was different to the earthly Jesus. The Risen body of Jesus was the same as the human body in which he lived among his people, preached the good news of the Kingdom of God, suffered his passion and died out of love for us, but risen from the dead, this body was now a glorious body. With his risen body, the Risen Lord was able to relate to others in a richer way than with the human body with which he related to others before his resurrection. Before his death and resurrection, Jesus related only to his contemporaries, his own people, kith and kin, and fellow citizens. With his risen body, he is now able to relate to all human beings of all times, every country and culture, our own included. He relates to us here and now.

It remains that we have to recognize Him. Like his disciples, we can be with the Risen Lord without recognizing Him. We have to learn to recognize him as he comes to us under so different guises: in the Scriptures, in the breaking of bread and more widely in all the sacraments of the Church, and through our brothers and sisters in humanity. We have to recognize the Risen Lord who comes to speak to us in very ordinary ways. It is in so many simple ways that Jesus reveals to us the Father's love for us; He finds multiple ways to touch us, to enlighten our path, to feed us, to heal us and to set us free from sin and death. The Scriptures read in prayer are the means par excellence by which to help ourselves decipher the presence of the Risen Lord in our lives. A good example of the importance of the Bible is the Risen Lord explaining to the two disciples who walked along the road to Emmaus all the passages throughout the Scriptures that were about himself in order to help them to recognize Him. This method worked! To come back to ourselves frequently, to enter into our hearts and to pray therein as we read the scriptures is a sure way of helping ourselves recognize the Risen Lord at work in our lives. Far from our hearts and without prayer, we cannot recognize Him.

2. In today's gospel passage, the fact that the disciples did not recognize the Risen Lord had a consequence. When He greeted his disciples with the words: "**Peace be with you**", far from being filled with the peace of the Risen Lord, the disciples experienced alarm, fright, agitation and doubts. The gospel narrative tells us that "In a state of alarm and fright, they thought they were seeing a ghost. But the Risen Lord said to them: "Why are you so agitated, and why are these doubts rising in your hearts"?"

We can legitimately ask ourselves what is the reason for such a reaction. It is true that the disciples had not recognized the Risen Lord. This would be enough to explain their fearful reaction. But it seems to me that there is another reason. And perhaps this is the real reason. In the mouth of the Risen Lord, "Peace be with you" is not only a conventional eastern greeting, something like "hi!" or "hello"! It is also and above all the Semitic greeting "shalom" which means "plenitude of life". This is the amazing wish of peace the Risen Lord addresses to each

one of us as we are. The Risen Lord knows us through and through. He knows our sins confessed and forgiven. He knows the weight of guilt and shame which still weighs upon us in spite of the forgiveness received. He also knows our unconfessed sins, those which we find it hard to acknowledge, our denials. Knowing all this, He says to us: "Peace be with you". The Risen Lord does not like our sins, but he loves the sinners we are. He has mercy upon us sinful though we are. His love for us is greater than our sins. For this reason he can say to us "peace be with you". For some of us, at certain hours at least, this can seem to be too good to be true. It can seem to us that our guilt and our shame are stronger than the Lord's forgiveness. We find it hard to believe that God's love far outweighs our poverty.

Plenitude of life is the gift of peace the Risen Christ offers. This is the good news. If the Risen Lord can say to sinners: "Peace be with you", it is because he has paid the price for our sins. He suffered his passion and his death on the Cross out of love for us, that is to say to reconcile us with the Father, to obtain forgiveness for us, and to set us free from the fear of death. Let us allow the Risen Lord to say to us "Peace be with you". Let us allow the Lord's peace to do its work of forgiveness of sin and liberation from death in our lives. The Lord's gift of peace is not a half-penny gift but the gift par excellence which is offered to us; it is a gift of which we all stand in need: forgiveness, the eradication of all guilt and shame, liberation of the fear of death. Here we have the real source of healing.

3. The resurrection of Jesus is inseparable from his passion and death. At the heart of the proclamation of the resurrection of Jesus, there is always the reminder that Jesus rose from the dead, and that this had been foretold by the prophets. On the road the Risen Jesus used the Scriptures to show the Emmaus travellers that **Christ would suffer** and on the third day rise from the dead.

Jesus remained faithful to his mission to reveal the Father's unlimited love for all human beings. His fidelity to his mission until the end led him to meet with opposition. Through his passion and death on the Cross He gave his life out of love for his Father and out of love for us.

Suffering is an inevitable part of our journey, and it is always something difficult to cope with. The example of Jesus can help us in this regard. Like Jesus, we are invited to remain faithful to our mission in life whatever happens to us. We are invited to see our sufferings as part of our mission. We are invited to live all our sufferings with Christ, in Christ, believing that ultimately he will give us a share in his victory. When we do this, then we find that we can experience the peace of the Risen Lord even in the midst of the worse tribulations, trials and difficulties.

The Risen Lord says to each one of us today: "Peace be with you"! Let us welcome his gift of peace!  
Amen.