

17. April 2021

“Even in the darkness Jesus is with us”

Jn 6:16-21

That evening the disciples went down to the shore of the sea and got into a boat to make for Capernaum on the other side of the sea. It was getting dark by now and Jesus had still not rejoined them. The wind was strong, and the sea was getting rough. They had rowed three or four miles when they saw Jesus walking on the sea and coming towards the boat. They were afraid, but he said, 'It's me. Don't be afraid.' They were ready to take him into the boat, and immediately it reached the shore at the place they were making for.

“It was getting dark by now and Jesus had still not rejoined them.” We can adapt this situation of the disciples for our way of discipleship or for the way of the Church. Certainly this passage speaks to us beyond the physical reality.

Let us look at it first of all for our personal situation. On the path of following Christ, there may be times when we find ourselves in the dark. Think, for example, of the disciples before the Lord's Resurrection. Their faith was not strong enough to contemplate the death of Jesus in this light, nor to remember the words of the Lord, who had already foretold to them all that awaited him (*cf. Mk 10:33-34*).

Something similar can happen to us. Darkness can envelop us, the light seems to have disappeared and Jesus has not yet come, or at least we have that impression.

This darkness can have different reasons. In the mystical tradition of the Church, we speak of the so-called “dark night of the senses” and the “dark night of the soul”. In these terms, a transformation that is experienced in the life of faith is expressed. If our relationship with the Lord had been strongly marked by feelings and emotions, it can happen that, at a moment of God's choosing, He deprives us of the sentimental experience of His presence. Then, what we used to enjoy and find very easy, such as singing certain songs, praying in a certain way or doing certain religious practices, suddenly no longer “tastes good” to us. Our senses are, so to speak, in the dark. In this situation, our feelings may rebel, like the storm at sea, because we are afraid. Perhaps we see Jesus only in a blurred form. But in such a process of purification, the Lord has by no means abandoned us. Rather, He draws near to us and wants us by faith to know that He is there.

Now, how can we apply this passage to the way of the Church?

There can also be times of darkness in the Church, for example, when there are unresolved conflicts; when unfaithfulness and sinfulness cast great shadows; when confusion comes to light, and errors spring up and grow...

In these times of certain insecurity, we must cling to the certainty that Jesus is always with His Church, even if it seems that He has not yet arrived. We may not see Him clearly, but He is there, drawing near to us. And He says to us: "*Don't be afraid.*" And it turns out that the boat, which was in the storm-tossed sea, has now reached the shore.

Even though we see no light at that very moment, we are invited to believe. The Lord has not left us alone on our personal journey, nor has He abandoned His Church. Rather, He is leading everything to the goal foreseen by God.