

22. April 2022

Love recognises first

Jn 21:1-14

Later on, Jesus revealed himself again to the disciples. It was by the Sea of Tiberias, and it happened like this: Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee and two more of his disciples were together. Simon Peter said, 'I'm going fishing.' They replied, 'We'll come with you.' They went out and got into the boat but caught nothing that night. When it was already light, there stood Jesus on the shore, though the disciples did not realise that it was Jesus. Jesus called out, 'Haven't you caught anything, friends?' And when they answered, 'No,' he said, 'Throw the net out to starboard and you'll find something.' So they threw the net out and could not haul it in because of the quantity of fish. The disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, 'It is the Lord.' At these words, 'It is the Lord,' Simon Peter tied his outer garment round him (for he had nothing on) and jumped into the water. The other disciples came on in the boat, towing the net with the fish; they were only about a hundred yards from land. As soon as they came ashore they saw that there was some bread there and a charcoal fire with fish cooking on it. Jesus said, 'Bring some of the fish you have just caught.' Simon Peter went aboard and dragged the net ashore, full of big fish, one hundred and fifty-three of them; and in spite of there being so many the net was not broken. Jesus said to them, 'Come and have breakfast.' None of the disciples was bold enough to ask, 'Who are you?' They knew quite well it was the Lord. Jesus then stepped forward, took the bread and gave it to them, and the same with the fish. This was the third time that Jesus revealed himself to the disciples after rising from the dead.

Once again Jesus manifests Himself to His beloved ones in such a way that they could recognise Him, by performing certain acts and gestures that they knew about Him from the time when they had lived together with Jesus. Like Mary Magdalene and the disciples of Emmaus, the apostles did not immediately recognise Him. But the net full of fish after a night of vain effort was a sign that the Lord had already worked before their eyes in his public life (cf. Lk 5:4-7). They were also familiar with Jesus' gestures in the context of community meals: taking bread, giving it to the disciples.

It was John, the disciple whom Jesus loved, who first recognised that he was the Lord and communicated this to the others. Love is the first force capable of recognising. In fact, love is the greatest of the theological virtues. Let us remember how St. Paul praises charity, puts it above everything else and even goes so far as to say that whatever gifts we

may have are of no avail if we lack charity (cf. Cor 13). It is therefore not insignificant that it is repeatedly mentioned in Sacred Scripture that Jesus loved John, who must have been the one who had the closest and most trusting relationship with Jesus.

If we look at it only from the natural point of view, the question might arise in us whether Jesus did not love the other disciples in the same way, or we might wonder whether it is right that he should have a preference for one in particular. But in the Kingdom of God things are different - God's love embraces everyone! If someone has special gifts, they are for other people, and he is called to share them. Thus, Jesus' love for John also served the other disciples. True love does not remain closed in on itself; it is given. When one day we are in eternity - may God grant it to us all - we will see how the angels in the highest ranks joyfully pass on their knowledge of God to those in the lowest ranks. In heaven, all live in the love of God. There is no envy or competition; no one is disadvantaged or thinks he is. What happiness awaits us!

Let us keep in our hearts one more aspect of this gospel. We see that the Lord does not show himself only in extraordinary events or in particularly solemn liturgies, however important they may be. Jesus also shows himself in the ordinary daily routines, in fishing and eating... His presence transforms natural realities, turning them into a service to God. The Lord wants to permeate everything and sanctify our whole life. As Saint Teresa of Avila said: *"God walks among the pots and pans"*.

It is important that we do not divide our life between moments of piety and religious practices; and those of natural work. This also counts for our inner journey with God, which has to be demonstrated in everyday life. For example, the love we receive through the Blessed Sacrament must be made tangible in our love for our neighbour. The neighbour, the one who lives next to me, is the one who is to receive that love. In my relationship with him and with people in general, I can see if my love is growing, if I am working on my own heart, etc....

Then Jesus manifests Himself in different ways and as the Risen One He is in our midst. If our eyes learn to see better and better, we will be able to recognise Him more clearly. And let us not forget: It is love that recognises first!