

12. April 2023

Wednesday of the Easter Octave

"I will give you what I have"

Acts 3:1-10

*Once, when Peter and John were going up to the Temple for the prayers at the ninth hour, it happened that there was a man being carried along. He was a cripple from birth; and they used to put him down every day near the Temple entrance called the Beautiful Gate so that he could beg from the people going in. When this man saw Peter and John on their way into the Temple he begged from them. Peter, and John too, looked straight at him and said, 'Look at us.' He turned to them expectantly, hoping to get something from them, but Peter said, 'I have neither silver nor gold, but I will give you what I have: in the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, walk!' Then he took him by the right hand and helped him to stand up. Instantly his feet and ankles became firm, he jumped up, stood, and began to walk, and he went with them into the Temple, walking and jumping and praising God. Everyone could see him walking and praising God, and they recognised him as the man who used to sit begging at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple. They were all astonished and perplexed at what had happened to him.*

*"I have neither silver nor gold, but I will give you what I have."*

This story about the miraculous healing of the crippled man also contains a message for us, pointing out to us how we can deal with the poor, who are again and again entrusted to us in a special way. Money is not always needed, and not everyone will be in a position to say with authority: Arise and walk, like the Apostle Peter. But what we can always give is our smile, our attention and an open heart, our prayer.

In this context, I remember an anecdote I experienced in India. At the entrance of the church of the Apostle Thomas there were a lot of beggars. Apart from the fact that, as a religious, I have no private money, it would have been impossible to give something to each beggar without causing an uproar among them. So what could I do? I realised that deep inside I had a tendency to simply want to enter the church unnoticed, without anyone seeing me. But that could not be the solution!

The Apostle Peter gives us a fundamental guideline, when he says to the crippled man: *"Look at us"*. With this word, he clearly shows that we should not avoid situations; but rather question ourselves what we have to give... *"I will give you what I have"*. Perhaps it is simply a friendly word of encouragement... Perhaps we can ask the Holy Spirit, the spirit of counsel, and follow His suggestion. With the 'look at us' we come into contact and do not simply pass by, eyes closed.

Of course Peter had to give visible testimony of the divine workings through the miracle, to accredit his mission. And indeed, after this miraculous healing, what should happen after every miracle did happen: The people who had witnessed it praised God and *"were all astonished and perplexed at what had happened to him."*

The Lord's work continues; the apostles can perform miracles in His Name, and indeed they have the task of doing so and of testifying in whose Name they have done it.

This last point is essential, for people tend to recognise only what their eyes see. It can easily happen then that the apostle or those disciples who perform miracles in the Name of the Lord, end up becoming the centre of attention and people focus only on them. Let us remember what happened to St. Paul in Malta, when he was bitten by a viper and, as he was not affected by the poison, the natives of the island began to say that Paul was a god (cf. Acts 28:3-6).

It is God's name that deserves praise; people are to know that the Lord cares for them and that His greatest desire is that they let themselves be loved by Him and reciprocate His love. In this way, the meaning of our existence is fulfilled: to live in union of will with God. From there, everything else follows.

Let us keep these words for these wonderful days of the Easter Octave: *"I will give you what I have"*. And this does not count only for the poor in a material sense; but for all the people we meet, because all, in one way or another, are in need.

What can we give them, what can we serve them with, what has the Lord entrusted to us? Everyone has something to give, even if it is only one talent. And if we have the impression that we have "nothing", then let us give precisely that "nothing", and God will transform it into "something".

We are to glorify God and serve men, each one in the calling he or she has received.  
This is what the apostles did.