



Balta Lelija

16. April 2023

Second Sunday of Easter
Forgiveness of sins and faith

Jn 20:19-30

In the evening of that same day, the first day of the week, the doors were closed in the room where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews. Jesus came and stood among them. He said to them, 'Peace be with you,' and, after saying this, he showed them his hands and his side. The disciples were filled with joy at seeing the Lord, and he said to them again, 'Peace be with you. 'As the Father sent me, so am I sending you.' After saying this he breathed on them and said: Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone's sins, they are forgiven; if you retain anyone's sins, they are retained. Thomas, called the Twin, who was one of the Twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples said to him, 'We have seen the Lord,' but he answered, 'Unless I can see the holes that the nails made in his hands and can put my finger into the holes they made, and unless I can put my hand into his side, I refuse to believe.' Eight days later the disciples were in the house again and Thomas was with them. The doors were closed, but Jesus came in and stood among them. 'Peace be with you,' he said. Then he spoke to Thomas, 'Put your finger here; look, here are my hands. Give me your hand; put it into my side. Do not be unbelieving any more but believe.' Thomas replied, 'My Lord and my God!' Jesus said to him: You believe because you can see me. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe. There were many other signs that Jesus worked in the sight of the disciples, but they are not recorded in this book. These are recorded so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing this you may have life through his name.

The apostles continue the mission that the Father entrusted to the Son; a mission that will last until the end of time, when it will reach its consummation. We are still in the time when the message of the Gospel must reach all people. The modern world, with all its technical advances, offers new and far-reaching possibilities for the proclamation to spread widely.

To enable the disciples to fulfil the mission entrusted to them, the Risen Lord breathes on them the Holy Spirit, giving them the power to forgive sins and also to retain them. This is a mighty power, for it is sin that separates us from God; it is sin

that, according to its gravity, impairs or destroys supernatural life in us. The Church has recognised this great gift of love as a sacrament, to which the faithful can turn again and again to order their lives before God, to start anew and to set out again in God's grace and in God's light.

If people understood the greatness of this sacrament, they would come much more frequently to drink from this fountain of grace. God makes it so easy for us to be reconciled with Him; His heart is always open and ready to forgive at all times. The problem is that we humans do not make sufficient use of this grace, and we quickly lose our awareness of what sin means. Perhaps we have not yet fully understood that God, in His infinite mercy, is happy to forgive us our sins, that He is only waiting for us to return to Him and that He offers us this sacrament also as a remedy for our souls. Indeed, how much suffering is caused by unforgiven sins! People can torment themselves for so long and even fall into despair, and they do not realise that the Heart of God is always open to reconciliation, and that all we have to do is a sincere confession and our purpose of amendment, so that the soul can be freed from the burden of guilt and the grace that God has granted us in His Son can become effective.

Today's Gospel also shows us how Jesus deals with the Apostle Thomas in this circumstance. Thomas had not wanted to believe the testimony of the other apostles, who, full of joy, told him that the Risen Lord had appeared to them. Thomas demanded proof and would only be willing to believe on the condition that he could assure himself that it was indeed the Lord.

When Jesus appeared to the whole group of apostles eight days later, He responded to Thomas' demand and fulfilled his desire to see and feel His wounds, so that he could be certain that the Lord had indeed risen.

Perhaps we can see in Thomas those people who find it difficult to embrace faith without an experience that touches their senses. Perhaps they are also those who need over and over again some kind of proof that God exists, that He is at work, that He loves them, etc...

We see that Jesus grants Thomas the proof he had asked for; but hand in hand with an important exhortation: *"Do not be unbelieving any more but believe"*.

Indeed, faith is not nourished first of all by what we can verify through the senses. Rather, it will be all the more perfect the less it seeks such evidence and clings simply to the Lord and revealed truth.

In mystical theology we are familiar with the phenomenon that along the path of following Christ, precisely those sensible experiences of faith, such as consolations, inner enthusiasm, etc., can be taken away from us. The purpose of this purification process is that we do not base our faith on our sensations, but on God Himself and His Word.

This is why Jesus' exhortation to Thomas also applies to us: Let us hold on to our faith and also trust in the testimony of others! Let us put aside mistrust and unnecessary doubts, without falling into the opposite extreme of naive credulity. In this way, our faith in the Risen Jesus can shine forth, so that we may have life in His Name. It is faith that grants us supernatural life and makes us grow and mature in it.