

18. April 2024

Obstacles to Faith

Lk 24:35-48

Then they told their story of what had happened on the road and how they had recognised him at the breaking of bread. They were still talking about all this when he himself stood among them and said to them, 'Peace be with you!' In a state of alarm and fright, they thought they were seeing a ghost. But he said, 'Why are you so agitated, and why are these doubts stirring in your hearts? See by my hands and my feet that it is I myself. Touch me and see for yourselves; a ghost has no flesh and bones as you can see I have.' And as he said this he showed them his hands and his feet. Their joy was so great that they still could not believe it, as they were dumbfounded; so he said to them, 'Have you anything here to eat?' And they offered him a piece of grilled fish, which he took and ate before their eyes. Then he told them, 'This is what I meant when I said, while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses, in the Prophets and in the Psalms, was destined to be fulfilled.' He then opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and he said to them, 'So it is written that the Christ would suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that, in his name, repentance for the forgiveness of sins would be preached to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses to this.'

The reality of the bodily resurrection of the Lord, although Jesus showed Himself to them before their eyes and spoke to them, first had to penetrate the consciousness of the disciples. It had to be removed what stood in the way of simple faith and thus the realisation of this reality.

It is moving to see how the Lord helped them to accept the evident.

Three points were also raised which can stand in the way of simple faith in His resurrection:

- It may sometimes even be a **fear** of encountering this supernatural reality that so blasts open our human experience and letting it permeate our lives. Perhaps it is

a fear of leaving the natural ground of our existence - namely, our home in our daily lives - and giving ourselves wholly to God in faith.

- Then the Lord mentions the **doubt** that arises in the heart. It is that force which makes us ambivalent, which questions what we should actually already recognise. We remember that the disciple Thomas was rebuked by the Lord for his doubt, even though He allowed him to touch His wounds (cf. Jn 20:27-29).
- There is even a third reason mentioned why they could not believe: **joy**. This overwhelming feeling took such hold of them that the supernatural act of faith was not performed. All three reasons why the disciples found it difficult had the same cause: they were still too attached to the natural life, which did not sufficiently open the way to faith.

The Lord had mercy on His disciples and communicated Himself to them in such a way that they came to understand it more and more: *“Touch me and see for yourselves”* and He ate before their eyes as they knew it when they were on the way with Him.

Now they were ready to receive the deeper understanding of the Holy Scriptures. They, as the first witnesses of His resurrection, were to be enabled to proclaim repentance to all peoples so that their sins might be forgiven in Christ. What a mighty task the Lord entrusted to them first! All people were to hear news of salvation in Christ, beginning in Jerusalem. First the message of the Gospel went to their own people until it was taken out into all the world. We know that the Lord told the disciples to wait for the coming of the Holy Spirit before the proclamation could be made in the authority of the Spirit (cf. Acts 1:4).

When we hear this commissioning of the disciples by the Risen Lord, we have to ask ourselves very seriously whether the fire that the Lord lit is still burning today (cf. Lk 12:49) or whether love has grown cold (cf. Mt 24:12). Do we still believe that the Gospel is salvation for all peoples and that their salvation consists in accepting faith? If this is no longer the case, then the spirit of this world has clouded us and made us believe otherwise. It is then all the more urgent to listen again more carefully to the message of the Lord. It remains and is unchanged: In the name of Jesus, repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be proclaimed to all peoples (cf. Lk 24:47). This is the main task

of the Church, which must never be neglected or distorted! It is on the mandate of the Risen Lord!