

22. April 2025

## THE GOSPEL OF ST. JOHN

### “The Risen Lord appears to His disciples”

Jn 20:19-23

*On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you.” When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I send you.” And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.”*

On the evening of that same day, the Lord showed himself to the disciples, who, fearing persecution from the Jews, had hidden themselves. But Jesus found His way to them, even through the closed doors, and began by wishing them peace. These were the first words of the Risen One to His disciples, and in them is expressed what is foreseen for all people.

How different it is when the Son of God Himself addresses men and assures them of the peace that comes from God! When it is received, this peace breaks through the darkness of ignorance, touches and opens closed hearts and fears begin to give way. It is the peace that the world cannot give (Jn 14:27), the peace that comes from living in accordance with truth and love, the peace that God offers to men as an infinite gift of His goodness and that gives them true life. Jesus comes to His own as the Risen One. He comes as the victor because He has defeated Satan, triumphed over death and paid the ransom for humanity on the cross: “Peace be with you”. It is His peace!

Then He shows them His hands and His side. He wants to give them the absolute certainty that it is He Himself who gave His life on the cross, so that the reality of His resurrection might penetrate them completely. The One who stands before them is their Lord, the One they have followed and for whom they have left everything. There was no more room for doubt! So now the joy that it is really Him, their beloved Lord, and that He is alive, breaks through.

Once again Jesus gives them His peace. He wants to strengthen them in it, because they will have to carry it to all people. They must know that the heavenly Father loves them and wants to give them eternal life. They must know that through His Son He has opened the way for them to be converted, to return to Him and to live. The disciples will be the true heralds of peace. Following their Lord, they will be sent out to proclaim the good news of salvation. As Jesus was sent by the Father, so they will be sent by Him.

Jesus had already made it clear to His disciples that He had chosen them. Now He breathes on them to receive the Holy Spirit. This Spirit would guide them, strengthen them and give them the authority to proclaim the Gospel. Then the Lord gives them the power that the Church will use throughout the centuries to save people in the sacrament of Penance: the forgiveness of sins in the name of Jesus. How important this is for people who often live under the weight of their sins and are deprived of their inner freedom! Not only do they lose their relationship with God, but they also live in contradiction with themselves and with the meaning of their existence, because sin destroys them, usurps their deepest vocation and affects their ability to live in true unity with others.

Jesus entrusts to the Apostles the great remedy for the nations: the merit of His sacrifice on the Cross, so that men may be reconciled to God and not die in their sin.

Let us pause for a moment: What would happen if people accepted the grace brought to them by the Risen One? What would happen if, moved by the Holy Spirit, they aligned their lives with the will of the heavenly Father? What would happen if they lived as true children of God?

The answers are not difficult. There would be that unity among people which comes from God and is based on truth and love. The peace which the risen Jesus brought to His disciples and which they brought to the whole world would spread and renew the face of the earth.

Is it just a pious illusion or a dream?

No! Neither Jesus nor His disciples were dreamers, nor would our Heavenly Father allow us to live in illusions. There is really this possibility, there is a way to reach it,

there is the truth that Pilate did not know (Jn 18:38), there is life that comes from God and will never end, there is the forgiveness of sins for all who convert and ask God for forgiveness, and there is the way to peace....

The disciples of Jesus are now strengthened in their faith, instructed and sent by Him. The Holy Spirit will help them. They will proclaim the Saviour of all people, Jew and Gentile alike. This is God's plan!