

Commentary on the Gospel for Thu, Apr 9th 2015

“You are witnesses of these things.”

One of the people who inspired me was a middle-aged widow who worked two jobs to feed and educate her two children. And yet she found time to be of help to the old and infirm in her neighborhood, and was a source of energy in her Church community. Her prayer flowed into action, and her simple, quiet life was a living witness to others. For me, and many others, she allowed Christ’s love and light burning in her heart, to shine through her and take away the darkness in those she served without trying to draw attention to herself.

“You are witnesses of these things.” These are Jesus’ words to his close friends soon after the Resurrection, when he appears to them in Jerusalem. They are initially terrified, thinking they are seeing a ghost, but their fear is turned to joy when they realize it is the Master who has flesh and bones, who eats baked fish with them, who opens their minds to understand all that was written about him in the Scriptures. The same Master explains how he had to suffer, die, and rise from the dead on the third day. And these disciples would preach repentance for the forgiveness of sins and witness to all peoples who Christ was by their preaching and by their lives. Peter and John do just that in the first reading by drawing people closer to Jesus.

The context of the first reading from the Acts of the Apostles is the healing of the cripple that we heard in yesterday’s liturgy. We heard Peter’s inspiring words, “I have neither silver nor gold, but what I do have I give you: in the name of Jesus Christ the Nazorean, [rise and] walk.” The cripple clings to Peter and John, and people are amazed by what has happened, but Peter is quick to set the record straight: the cripple has been made strong and given perfect health by faith in the name of Jesus. Peter goes on to bring to their consciousness how they had put Jesus to death, but God raised him from the dead, and of this fact, he is a witness. His intention is not to make them undergo a guilt-trip but to realize that they acted in ignorance, and that now they have a great opportunity to repent, to be converted, and to be refreshed in the Lord.

Let us pause for a moment of quiet and prayer:

Dear Jesus, fill me with your Spirit that I may witness to the wonders you have worked in my life.

May I bring your compassion and forgiveness to those I meet. And may I daily draw others closer to you by my actions. Amen.

Roland Coelho, S.J.