

Commentary on the Gospel for Thu, Apr 4th 2024

Hands and Feet

“He stood among them.” That’s how John described the first apparition of Jesus to his disciples after the resurrection. The disciples were huddled together, with the doors locked because they feared the Jews. But Jesus breaks through the confinements, and “he stood among them.” He just stood inside the circle of their fears.

Left to ourselves, we would remain forever inside our locked doors of anxieties and fears, and efforts to bring us out would be an arduous task. The Risen Lord comes to meet us where we are, comes without force, arguments or explanations, and liberates us into peace and joy that God alone can give.

Easter Sunday had been intense. First, some women had the experience of two characters clothed in bright robes announcing the resurrection of Jesus. In the afternoon, two other disciples, on their way to Emmaus, were accompanied by a pilgrim who warmed their hearts with his words and revealed himself as the risen Christ. Gradually, the community of disciples began to realise that Jesus had really risen.

But now, with the body of Jesus missing from the tomb, the threat of the Jews launching an attack on the disciples was very real. So they shut themselves up. And Jesus stood amid their fears and greeted them: “Peace be with you!” The first reaction is one of wonder, doubt and fear. Then he says: “Look at my hands and my feet: it is me alive!”

There is something curious to note here: Our identification documents will carry a photo of our face, but the identification marks of Christ are his hands and feet! Jesus did not ask the disciples to look at his face but at his feet and hands. Those were the hands that healed the sick, raised the dead, blessed children, broke the bread ... and those blessed feet that walked so many places, the feet that accompanied the needy and walked into the houses of sinners ...

What Jesus showed the disciples were not his wounds but the scars of love. Those signs would be carried into eternity: the Risen One is also the Crucified. Those feet and hands show that when you live for love, your sufferings become a sign of tenderness, no matter how bad.

These hands and feet of Jesus can also be seen in all those who work for the good of humanity. True disciples of Jesus must also be identified by their hands and feet. Blessed are the feet and hands that are marked by acts of love because they reveal the presence of God! When the night of our lives comes, God will ask us to show him our hands and our feet... Do they have the scars of love for God and his people?