

Commentary on the Gospel for Sat, Apr 6th 2024

When the Lord calls you, do not doubt

People did not easily recognise Jesus when he appeared to them after his resurrection. Mary Magdalene mistook him for the gardener (John 20:15). Many of the disciples were scared that they saw a ghost (Luke 24:37); he showed himself “in another form” to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus (Mark 16:12). But they did not recognise him.

“Seeing is believing” is an old saying. Seeing is accepted as “our principal source of knowledge,” according to Aristotle. But this kind of sight was not adequate to recognising the Risen Christ. It requires seeing with the heart and the spirit, not with the eyes. People who claim to have seen apparitions give us the impression that they have exceptional faith. But that is a wrong assumption. Remember what Jesus told Thomas and other disciples: “Blessed are those who believe without seeing!”

“We cannot grasp what God is,” said St Thomas Aquinas. It is the other way around: we are grasped by God; God possesses us. We cannot comprehend him – either with our eyesight or with our minds. We can only join St Paul, who prays for the Ephesians that they may by “knowing the love of Christ, which is beyond all knowledge... be filled with the utter fulness of God” (Ephesians 3:19).

Today’s Gospel introduces three witnesses to Jesus’ resurrection. The first, Mary Magdalene, reported that Jesus was risen and was alive, but “They would not believe her.” The second is the testimony of the disciples to Emmaus, but “They did not believe them.” But in the third, Jesus entrusts his epic project of preaching the Gospel to this still an unbelieving or doubting group of disciples. “Go out to the whole world and proclaim the Good News.”

You don’t need perfect faith to join the Mission of Jesus. It is given to you as you go. Faith in Jesus is for their use on the road. It is not a certificate to be kept in the files. If we feel that we are called to work for the Lord, do it, and grace will be given to us as we go. Grace is not given for tomorrow; it is always for now.

Pope Francis writes in Joy of the Gospel: “every Christian, in any place and situation in which he is...there is no reason for anyone to think that this invitation is not for him, because “no one is excluded from the joy reported by the Lord.” Those who take risks, the Lord does not disappoint, and when someone takes a small step towards Jesus, they discover that He already awaits their arrival with open arms” (EG 3).

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