

## Commentary on the Gospel for Sun, May 12th 2024

The feast of the Ascension marks the end of the life of Jesus in this world, and he passes on to the disciples the mission to build this new world that Jesus began. The Gospel begins with Jesus rebuking his disciples just before his ascension!

The disciples see the risen Lord while they are seated at the table. It is a detail that is also remembered by the other evangelists. Luke tells us that the disciples of Emmaus opened their eyes and saw the risen one at the breaking of the bread, when they were seated at the table. Also John, at the lake of Tiberias: the disciples recognized the risen one when he offered them bread. This is catechesis, it is the moment when the community is gathered on the Lord's day and at the moment of the breaking of the bread their eyes are opened, and they see the risen one. Today we are the Eleven, who gather at the table of the Lord to see and experience him.

Jesus rebukes them because they are unbelieving and hard-hearted. It is said that they did not believe Mary Magdalene, nor the two disciples of Emmaus who had met the risen one. Believing in the resurrection of Jesus would mean, accepting the proposal of Jesus to give up their own lives in order to preserve it.

Many times we also doubt and ask ourselves, could it be true that by giving my life as Jesus did, I can keep it? Wouldn't it be better for me to do what everybody else does? If I give up enjoying life, won't I regret it in the end? That is the difficulty in believing. But the Gospel promises accompanying signs for those who believe: power to drive out demons, speak new languages, poisonous serpents or food will not harm them and they can heal the sick.

What are these signs all about? It is not about the preachers becoming miracle workers. Many Christians have fallen into this trap and run in search of miracle workers among the preachers. Today the demons that need to be driven out are pride, greed, attachment to possessions, resentment, wanting to make those who hurt us pay for it. Moral debauchery, selfishness, falsehood, anger, jealousy. These are the demons that dehumanize us and make us violent, cruel, insensitive to the needs of the poor. These are the demons that are cast out, not with holy water, but with the gospel.

"They will speak new languages." What are the languages that the believers of the Gospel would speak? The language of retaliation, of revenge, of answering a crime with another crime: This is the language of the old world. The new humanity needs a new language, - a language of the gospel of love, of forgiveness, of reciprocal, and unconditional service. Do we realise that this our vocation into which we are baptised?