

23 April 2017 (2nd Sunday of Easter, Year A)

Acts 2:42-47; Psalm 117(118):2-4,13-15,22-24; 1Peter 1:3-9; John 20:19-31.

My Lord and my God!

The story of the resurrection brings to completion the gospel according to John. In the beginning of John's gospel we are told that this was the story of Jesus, the Word of God who became flesh and dwelt among us (1:1-14). At the end of the gospel the apostle Thomas makes the great declaration of faith: My Lord and my God! This is our own faith journey.

The gospel of John is the faith experience of the Church community that was nurtured around the apostle John. Together they tried to understand and believe in this man Jesus who was sent by God, performed great signs, taught them about the Father, died and rose again. Like the community of the apostles and disciples, the Church community did not always find it easy to believe in Jesus. There were a number of struggles they had to face, and they saw these struggles in the stories narrated in this gospel, not least in Peter's betrayal.

This Church community had the teaching and witness of John who shared with them his personal experience of Jesus' ministry, passion, death and resurrection. But the members of the Church did not experience the risen Christ directly, they depended on John's testimony. Jesus tells Thomas: blest are they who will believe without seeing! The Church around John and we are among those who are invited to believe without having seen the risen Christ.

The gospel of John tells us that the resurrection is possible and it is real. The apostles experienced Jesus as a real person in their midst, and this happened on a number of occasions. The apostles tell us that the risen Christ still carried on his body the marks of the cross, and they could touch and feel those wounds.

The risen Christ is certainly not a ghost, but has a real, glorified body. This risen body is not limited by space and time, as we experience our own world, but can pass through closed doors, yet it can be touched and still carries characteristic features. Moreover the marks of the passion on the glorified body of Christ are a reminder to the early Church and to us today that the passion and death are a reality and we can only reach the resurrection through our own suffering.

The wounds on the glorified body of Jesus can represent for us our own moments of doubt and lack of faith, our physical and emotional pain, the pain we suffer as the body of Christ, as a Church. All this is part of our human experience. Like the apostles we often feel lost and cannot see the way forward, but together with the apostles we need to go back to Christ and experience the peace he gives us: peace be with you. Among our pain and suffering, Christ gives us his forgiveness and peace. The only thing he asks of us is to 'have faith and believe in him.'

The journey of our faith continues; it will only be complete when we meet Jesus face to face in heaven. In the meantime we have the witness of the apostles and of the Church to guide us forward.

Fr Mario