

28 May 2017 (Ascension Sunday of Easter, Year A)

Acts 1:1-11; Psalm 46(47):2-3,6-8; Ephesians 1:17-23; Matthew 28:16-20.

Go ..., make disciples ..., baptise them ..., and teach them

The resurrection story does not end here! In the book of the Acts of the Apostles, the sequel to the Luke's gospel, the author informs us that for forty days Jesus continued to appear to the disciples and then returned to the Father from whom he had come. This story is not the concluding chapter but rather the opening one! This is the first thing Luke writes about in this second book.

Luke is the first person to write a history of the Church. His aim was to inform us how the good news of Jesus Christ spread out to the whole world. In his gospel Luke speaks to us about Jesus Christ and in the second book he speaks to us about the Church that carries on Jesus' work.

The story of Jesus starts with the announcement that the Son of God, God himself, was going to be born amongst us as one of us. Jesus had a clear mission to carry out; he came to speak to us about the Father. This Jesus did through his the miracles he performed, his teaching, and most importantly, his life, death and resurrection. Jesus is the visible face of the invisible God. The opening verses of the letter to the Hebrews informs us that God had long been trying to show himself to humanity by sending different messengers; finally he resolved to send his only Son.

The good news that Jesus speaks about is the fact that God loves us. God does not only love those who are good or those who listen to his word; God loves all of humanity. God is love itself and it is very important that the whole world get to know and taste this great love, we are, after all, created in the image and likeness of this love.

The mission of Jesus continues. While Jesus has returned to the Father, he has missioned his disciples to 'go out, make disciples, baptise them and teach them;' this is the mission of the Church! As today's disciples this is our mission. In the book of the Acts of the Apostles Luke shows us how the apostles and the early disciples carried out this mission; through their efforts the good news reached Rome, the centre of the known world, and so in Luke's understanding, it had reached the whole world. From the centre of the world it is easy to influence the whole world!

Experience tells us that even if the good news has been preached in the past, the work does not stop and we need to continue spreading the news. We are asked to go out into the world and proclaim this good news. How do we spread the good news in the world we live in? Is our faith a witness to the love of God in our life and in the life of those whom we encounter every day? Do we express this love to members of our family, co-workers, people we meet in my time of relaxation?

We are invited to baptise those who believe. The word baptise has two meanings; to immerse and to make Christian. Jesus invites us to immerse those we meet in the name of the Trinity; they need to live and breathe the life of God. Those who accept our witness are then invited to Baptism, and immersion in water and the start of a new life in the Father, Son and Spirit. Our role is to support this baptism by teaching through the witness we give in our life.

Fr Mario