



The Holy See

VISIT OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS TO THE ROMAN PARISH OF "SAN PAOLO DELLA CROCE"

Sunday, 15 April 2018

[[Multimedia](#)]

The disciples knew that Jesus had risen because Mary Magdalen had said so that morning; then Peter saw Him; then the disciples who had returned from Emmaus told of their encounter with the Risen Jesus. They knew it: He is risen and lives. But that truth had not entered the heart. That truth, yes, they knew it, but they were doubtful. They preferred to hold that truth in their mind, perhaps. It was less dangerous to hold a truth in one's mind than to keep it in one's heart. It is less dangerous.

They were all gathered and the Lord appeared. And at first they were afraid and believed that he was a spirit. But Jesus himself said to them: "look, touch me. See the wounds. A spirit has no body. See, it is I!". But why did they disbelieve? Why were they doubtful? There is a word in the Gospel which gives us the explanation: "they still disbelieved for joy, and wondered...". For *joy* they could not believe. That joy was so great! If this is the truth, it is an immense joy! "Ah, I do not believe it. I cannot". They could not believe there was so much joy; the joy that leads to Christ.

This also happens to us when we are given good news. Before accepting it in our heart we say: "But is it true? But how do you know? Where did you hear it?". We do so in order to be sure, because, if this is true, it is a great joy. This happens to us in our own small way; imagine the disciples! The joy was so great that it was better to say: "No, I do not believe it". But he was there! Yes, but they could not. They could not accept it; they could not let the truth they saw pass into their heart. And in the end, naturally, they believed. This is the "renewed youthfulness" that the Lord gives us. In the Collect prayer we said: "renewed youthfulness". We are accustomed to sin aging us.... Sin ages the heart, always. It makes your heart hard, old, weary. Sin makes the heart

grow weary and we somewhat lose faith in the Risen Christ: “No, I do not think so.... This would be so much joy.... Yes, yes, he lives, but in Heaven, for his own affairs”. But I am his affair! Each of us! But we are unable to make this connection.

In the [First] Letter the Apostle John says: “if any one does sin, we have an advocate with the Father”. Do not be afraid; he forgives. He renews us. Sin ages us, but Jesus, Risen, living, renews us. This is the power of the Risen Jesus. When we approach the Sacrament of Penance it is in order to be renewed, to rejuvenate. And the Risen Jesus does this. It is the Risen Jesus who is in our midst today: he will be here on the altar; he is in the Word.... And he will be likewise on the altar: Risen! It is Christ, the Advocate, who wants to defend us when we have sinned, to rejuvenate us.

Brothers and sisters, let us ask for the grace to believe that Christ is alive, is Risen! This is our faith, and if we believe this, other things are secondary. This is our life; this is our true youthfulness. Christ’s victory over death, Christ’s victory over sin. Christ is alive. “Yes, yes, now I will receive Communion...”. But when you receive Communion, are you certain that Christ is alive, there; he is Risen? “Yes, it is a piece of blessed bread...”. No, it is Jesus! Christ is alive; he is Risen among us, and if we do not believe this we will never be good Christians. We cannot be.

But “they still disbelieved for joy, and wondered”. Let us ask the Lord for the grace that joy not hinder us from believing, the grace to touch the Risen Jesus: to touch him in the encounter through prayer; in the encounter through the sacraments; in the encounter with his forgiveness which is the renewed youthfulness of the Church; in the encounter with the sick, when we go to visit them, with the imprisoned, with those who are most needy, with children, with the elderly. If we feel the wish to do something good, it is the Risen Jesus who spurs us to this. It is always joy, the joy that makes us youthful.

Let us ask for the grace to be a joyful community, because each of us is certain, has faith, has encountered Jesus Christ.