

“Recognizing the Risen Christ”

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During the last Sundays we have been listening to how the disciples recognized the Lord after his resurrection. We first heard the story about the apostle Thomas, who finally recognized him, when Jesus showed him his wounds and said: “blessed are those who believe without seeing.” We are those lucky ones. We acknowledge the Lord and believe, even though we have not seen him.

The following Sunday, we saw that two disciples recognized Jesus when, on the way to Emmaus, he broke bread as he began a meal with them. This story was written only fifty years after the death of Jesus, which indicates that the Christian communities had already been recognizing the presence of the Risen One among them when they sat down to dine together in memory of him, in the Holy Eucharist; at that time it was still a full dinner in private homes. It is another reference to what the apostle Paul had called: “Christ in you, the hope of glory.”

Then we hear the story about Jesus, the Good Shepherd who knows his sheep by his name, and whom they, in turn, recognize by his voice; for he is the one who opens the door of his pen.

All of Easter, which lasts 50 days, is a long reflection on this mystery: that Christians can recognize the risen Lord among us, not only in each one individually, but in the community that we are. This is the fundamental experience of Jesus' followers after his death and evidence of his resurrection.

Today we hear the explanation that Jesus gives to his disciples before he dies: “I am not going to leave you orphans; I will return to be with you... you will see me, and you will live because I live.” At another time he tells them: “And I will ask the Father to send you another Defender, the Spirit of Truth, so that he will always be with you... you know him, because he remains with you and will be in you.”

Here Jesus is speaking of the Holy Spirit, that is the Spirit of Truth in whom there is no place for lies, who opens our eyes to recognize God in Christ and in ourselves, for he knows each one of us by name . For this reason our communities, our parishes, have to be communities of truth.

“On that day,” as the gospel says, “you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I in you... My Father will love the one who loves me, and I will also love him and he will show him.”

Where do we find the risen Christ today? In recent years, with all that we have experienced as a society, God has tested and refined us as silver is refined. An epidemic, a war, social conflicts, divisions even in our church. And in all of this we have discovered that God is with us, in the depths of our hearts, because "in God we live, we move and we exist."

In today's gospel, Jesus explains to us how it is possible to come to recognize this God who is with us: it is the work of the Holy Spirit. But we were not born with it. We receive it in Holy Baptism. All Christians receive the Holy Spirit in the water of this sacrament. On that occasion we were marked as “Christ's property forever” and received as full members of his risen Body, the Church.

The apostle Paul, in his letter to the Romans, explains how this happened: in holy baptism "we were buried with him in imitation of his death, to rise with him in imitation of his resurrection", in such a way that, thus participating in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we are born to new life in the Holy Spirit and are made members of Christ and his Church forever. In the water of baptism, as the prayer of blessing of baptismal water says, “we are buried with Christ in his death. Through it, we participate in his resurrection. Through it, we are born again by the Holy Spirit."

The Spirit that we receive there is what allows us to recognize Christ among us. Since then Christ lives in each one of us and we in him. And not only us, because as the second reading says: Christ, “in his human frailty, died; but he rose with a spiritual life, and in this way he went to proclaim his victory to the spirits that were imprisoned." That

is, even our ancestors, beginning with Adam and Eve, all of them participate in his resurrection; and it is precisely that in his resurrection Christ has made the entire creation new.

This awesome mystery of Christ's death and his new life among us is the center of our being as Christians. From this mystery we are all born as the Church.

Christ has risen! It is true, the Lord has risen! We are looking at it with our own eyes in each one; in all of us. Let us be thankful then for this infinite love of God who not only raised Christ from the dead, but also us with him, who with the Father and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns among us, now and forever, Amen.