



The Holy See

MASS AT THE PARISH OF St JUDE THADDEUS IN ROME

HOMILY OF THE POPE JOHN PAUL II

Second Sunday of Easter

Sunday, 6 April 1997

1. *“Eight days later ... the doors were shut, but Jesus came and stood among them, and said, ‘Peace be with you’ (Jn 20:26).*

The Gospel passage for today, “Dominica in albis”, tells of *the twofold appearance of the Risen One to the Apostles*: on Easter day itself and eight days later. On the evening of the first day after the Sabbath, while the Apostles were gathered in one room, the doors being locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus comes and says to them: “Peace be with you” (cf. Jn 20:19). With this greeting he is in fact offering them the gift of genuine peace, the fruit of his Death and Resurrection. Indeed, in the Easter mystery humanity’s definitive reconciliation with God was achieved; it is the source of all real progress towards the full restoration of peace between individuals and peoples with one another and with God.

Jesus then gives the Apostles the task of continuing his saving mission, so that through their ministry salvation may reach every time and place of human history: “As the Father has sent me, even so I send you” (Jn 20:21). The gift of the Spirit is also closely linked to his entrusting them with the mission of evangelization and the power to forgive sins, as the following words of Jesus indicate: “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven” (Jn 21:22-23).

With these words Jesus entrusts the ministry of mercy to his disciples. In fact the saving love of God, *rich in mercy* — “dives in misericordia” (cf. Eph 2:4) — is fully manifest in the paschal mystery. On this Second Sunday of Easter, the liturgy invites us to reflect specifically on divine mercy, which overcomes all human limitations and shines forth in the darkness of evil and sin. The Church urges us to have trust as we approach Christ, who through his Death and Resurrection fully and definitively reveals the extraordinary riches of God’s merciful love.

2. The Apostle Thomas was not present when the Risen One appeared on Easter evening. When told of this extraordinary event, he did not believe the testimony of the other Apostles but wanted to verify the truth of their assertion personally.

Eight days later — that is, on the octave day of Easter, just like today — the appearance is repeated: Jesus himself challenges Thomas' disbelief by giving him the opportunity *to touch with his hands the marks left by the passion*, and by inviting him to turn from disbelief to the fullness of Easter faith.

In response to Thomas' profession of faith: "My Lord and my God!" (Jn 20: 28), Jesus utters a beatitude that *broadens the horizon to include the multitude of future believers*: "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe" (Jn 20:29). The Easter experience of the Apostle Thomas was *greater than his own request*. Indeed, he was not only able to recognize the authenticity of the marks of the Passion and the Resurrection, but through personal contact with the Risen One, he understood the profound meaning of Jesus' Resurrection and, inwardly transformed, he openly declared his full and total faith in his Lord, risen and present among the disciples. Therefore, in a certain sense he could "see" the divine reality of the Lord Jesus, who died and rose for us. The Risen One himself is the definitive proof of both his divinity and his humanity.

3. All of us are invited as well to see with the eyes of faith Christ living and present in the Christian community. Dear brothers and sisters of the parish of St Jude Thaddeus, I am very pleased to be among you at last in your lovely parish. I greet you all with great affection! This visit was delayed a little because of an illness, but it is finally taking place and taking place on the most solemn day possible. I address a cordial greeting to the Cardinal Vicar, to the Vicegerent, to your zealous parish priest, Fr Gabriele Zuccarini, and to the priests who work with him in the pastoral care of your community.

I likewise greet the sisters of the Institute of sisters of the Institute of the Sisters of Mercy and the Daughters of Charity of the Precious Blood. My thoughts also turn to the residents of the neighbourhood, especially to those who were unable to be present because of some hindrance. I am thinking specifically of the sick, the elderly and those who, for various reasons, are in difficulty.

Dear brothers and sisters, in your parish, where in recent years the number of elderly or single people has increased and where the settlement of *a second young generation of families* has begun, a far-reaching work of new evangelization is more necessary than ever. In fact, the pastoral challenge is to help all families, especially the youngest, to discover the riches of the Gospel and to persevere in the duties of the Christian faith.

I entrust you especially, dear faithful, members of the many parish groups, with the task of being *messengers of hope*, bringing the Gospel to your brothers and sisters who live in the

neighbourhood. Do not expect them to come to you, but go to them, trusting in the power of the Word that you bring. In fact the city mission with its many initiatives is now calling every Christian in Rome to rediscover the missionary mandate entrusted by the risen Jesus to all the baptized through the ministry of the Apostles. According to what the Cardinal Vicar and the Auxiliary Bishops of the various sectors tell me, there are many people willing to take part in the *city mission*. These people are coming forward to participate actively in the new evangelization of Rome.

4. The evangelization offered by the *city mission* however will be all the more effective the more the missionaries' work is supported and accompanied by prayer. I therefore congratulate you on the many initiatives of prayer and weekly — including nocturnal — Eucharistic adoration held in this beautiful community. *Prayer is the soul of the mission*. Persevere, dear brothers and sisters, because contact with God guarantees the authenticity of apostolic activity.

In the Gospels we read that even while doing all he could for so many men and women, Jesus himself would withdraw for long periods in solitude and prayer (cf. Mt 14:23; Mk 1:35; Lk 6:12; 9:18; 11:1; Jn 6:15; etc.). We must imitate him and encounter him in the moments of solitude and silence dedicated to prayer. These providential spiritual pauses will help you all to be authentic missionaries of the Gospel in this great city of ours.

5. “*The company of those who believed were of one heart and soul*” (Acts 4:32).

The apostolic community of Jerusalem described in the Acts of the Apostles is a model for every Christian community. We who now live on the threshold of the third Christian millennium must also become increasingly of one heart and mind in our liturgical celebrations, as well as in our apostolic activity and our witness of charity. We must strive to give a forceful witness to the Resurrection of Jesus (cf. Acts 4:33), in communion with the successors of the Apostles.

“This is the victory that overcomes the world, our faith”, the First Letter of John (5:4) has just reminded us. Through faith, expressed in keeping the commandments, we too are called to defeat the powers of evil in order to prepare with our apostolate the full manifestation of the kingdom of God.

With the words of the responsorial psalm, we want to express our exultation at the marvels God continues to work in our time as well. In the Passover of his dead and risen Son, he in fact reaches out to every person, showing forth the infinite riches of his boundless mercy.

“This is the day which the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it” (Ps 118:24).

Amen. Alleluia!

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