



Lectio Divina. Pentecost Sunday. Cycle A

Bogotá (Colombia), Sr. Ana Francisca Vergara, May 31, 2020.- The gift of the evening of the first day, from fear to joy.

GOSPEL

Jn 20: 19-23

¹⁹ On the evening of that first day of the week, when the doors were locked, where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, "Peace be with you." ²⁰ When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. The disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. ²¹[Jesus] said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." ²²And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the holy Spirit. ²³ Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained."



STUDY OF THE TEXT

(v.19) This verse contradicts the one that begins the chapter (20:1) in which Mary Magdalene is shown leaving her residence at dawn on this same day to go fearlessly to the tomb. The men, on the contrary, fearful, closed themselves inside their shelter. It seems that the evangelist wants to present two contrast situations: the fear that invades the community and the gift of peace given by the Risen One. The scene undoubtedly takes place in Jerusalem; the group is made up of the disciples who, in the Johannine language, describe not only those close to Jesus during his existence, but also those who will join him in the future. The doors, well closed, show that Jesus makes himself present among the believers in spite of their human boundaries that imprison and frighten them.

The greeting of the Risen One, his first words to the disciples, are an invitation to remember what he had already announced at his farewell discourse. The followers of Jesus are invited to receive the gift of peace (cf. Jn 14:27-28).

(v. 20) As if to indicate that he is not a ghost, Jesus invites those who were present to look at his hands and his side. They are invited to see that the Risen One has indeed come in flesh and bones in their midst. On this point we can compare it with the text of Lk 24:37-39.

To contemplate and touch His hands, His side and His feet is an invitation to witness that the Risen One is the Crucified One himself; the joy of the disciples expresses their prompt and joyful faith. The author of the story underlines the verb **to see**, which is proper to the fourth Gospel. In this way, what was announced by the master in 14:19 is fulfilled here. Now the disciples confirm what Mary Magdalene had said, it became their own experience.

(v. 21) The gift of peace is offered again by Jesus to confirm that a new time is beginning. Now is the time of the disciples; as the Father sent him, so now he sends them. The fact **that he** put in the mouth of the Risen One is more than a comparison that would make one suppose that, just as the father performs an act with Jesus, so he performs it with his disciples. **This is** indicated above all by the prolongation of Jesus' mission, that is, the disciples are sent to continue the work of the Son that comes from the Father.

(v.22) Just as at the beginning of salvation history, Jesus breaths on his disciples with the life-giving breath to encourage them. Christians are a new creation, animated by the action of the Spirit. The verb used by the fourth evangelist is identical to that is used by Gen 2:7 and Wis15:11, as if to indicate that Jesus, like the Father, gives life and allows us to participate in the divine life. The breath of Jesus is the manifestation of eternal life in us. The sending given in the previous verse is intrinsically linked to the sending of the Holy Spirit to the disciples. Let us remember that the fourth Gospel insists on the unity between the resurrection and the gift of the Spirit; the separation of the two times, that of Christ and of the Spirit is unthinkable. All of us who believe in Christ, profess his passion, death and

resurrection, receive the Spirit who gives us the capacity to form a community and proclaim the Kingdom.

(v.23) It is worth saying that the Gospel according to John has not spoken of forgiveness of sins, until now. At this point we can see a unity of this Gospel with that of Matthew when he speaks of the power given to the apostles to “*bind and loose*” (Mt 18:18). This play of words, which encompasses everything possible between two opposing words, indicate in rabbinical Judaism the authority to teach and to govern the community. This authority is granted to all the disciples. We could say that today we, as a believing community, also have a responsibility to lead and to teach. Authority that comes directly from Jesus.

MEDITATION

Many are the fears that all of us along with our brothers and sisters have gone through in the last few months, we have been locked inside in our own homes and limited at the level of relationships. We fear death and the loss of our loved ones.

Today the Lord is present in the *the midst of* our community, that is, he is in the sacred place par excellence; he makes himself visible among those who gather in his name in the same way as in the OT the ark of the covenant occupied the central place when the people of Israel were camping in the desert (cf. The book of Numbers). In the group of the disciples, in Jn 20:19-23, it is not possible to describe concretely who was gathered there, we do not know how many there were nor do we know their names; this lack of indications allows the text to be applied to all the followers of Jesus Christ without fixing a space or an era and that today we can apply it to our contexts.

Today, more than ever, we are sent, like the apostles, to announce the peace of Jesus Christ in the world, a peace that gives us hope and security; a peace that encourages us to continue in spite of everything and that reconciles us with ourselves and with others. We are sent to make known the name of the Father and to manifest his love. Today, we must make it real that, as followers of Jesus, we continue His work, are capable of doing great works, as Jesus expresses in the Gospel of John: “*I tell you the truth, whoever believes in me will do the works that I do, and greater works than these, because I go to the Father*” (Jn 14:12).

We should not think that the offering of the Spirit is a special grace given only for some; it is rather a gift offered to all believers (cf. 1Jn 4:13-14). The Holy Spirit is present and lives in the community; therefore, we are both recipients and givers of his presence and action; hence the Risen Christ exercises forgiveness through his disciples who are of yesterday and those of today, that is, those who believe in his Word and divine filiation. The community

has the power to welcome and to forgive, thanks to the gift of the Spirit that the Lord offers us; let us take advantage of this great gift, receive it, make it alive among us and around us.

PRAYER

O Father of goodness, we thank you for the great gift of your Spirit, who descends upon us through the breath of your beloved Son, to strengthen us in the moments when we need it most. Help us, with your power to open the doors that are closed out of fear recently so that impelled by your Spirit, we become messengers of the Gospel to the ends of the world. We ask this through Jesus Christ your Son, who lives and reigns with you forever and ever. Amen.

CONTEMPLATION

Lord, at this moment of turbulence, fear and closed indoors, we need to breathe you, to have life giving air for ourselves with your breath in order to be ready to meet our brothers and sisters.

May the awareness of my breathing allow me, as I inhale, to open myself so that God may enter me and regenerate me; and as I exhale, to allow that which is not divine in me leave.