April 28, 2019

Solemnity of the Second Sunday of Easter

Acts 5:12-16; Ps 118:2-4, 13-15, 22-2; Rev 1:9-11a, 12-13, 17-19; Jn 20:19-31

By Domenico Di Raimondo, MSpS

The Lord is risen, Alleluia! We were singing a few days ago after we celebrated Lent and Holy Week 2019. It is a message of joy and peace for the world. And, at the same time, we do feel that the work of justice, peace, and the care of our planet still has a long way to go. There is a temptation to get discouraged and even angry. Today's message comes in handy if this is the case for you and me.

The first day of the week, when the women and men disciples were together, when there was fear and a deep sense of loss and sadness, Jesus visits his friends. His word and gestures are combined to affirm the same message, Peace be with you!

To us, the women and men disciples who today battle hunger, capital punishment, sexual abuse, immigration and more issues of the kind, Jesus comes and says Peace be with you! Do not be afraid! Do not be discouraged; do not loose heart in the battle for justice and mercy! Peace be with you! I send you to the world as my Father once sent me! I give you the strength from on high, the master, the consoler and guide that I received from my Father. Peace be with you!

If you are involved to bring peace, reconciliation and justice to our society, and if you are at times discouraged and even angry with the women and men who oppose this awesome work, Jesus example in his dealings with Thomas might be helpful.

Let us go to the Gospel story: Thomas, one of the twelve, does not accept the good news passed on to him by the group of women and men disciples; his points of view easily dismiss the joyful good news. He stays firm in his own opinion. Maybe out of a personal hurt, he behaves in a gross and disgraceful manner. It is possible that, in hearing Thomas reaction, the disciples also dismissed Thomas and cornered him to the side.

When Jesus comes again, twenty centuries ago, he accepts Thomas as he is and, with a merciful and assertive attitude, he gains him back into the group and engages him in the work of salvation.
Come, put your finger here, and see my hands; bring your hand and put it into my side. Do not be unbelieving, but believe!

A few days ago, Pope Francis invited to the Vatican, at St. Martha’s Residence, the civil and ecclesiastical authorities of South Sudan. With mercy and assertiveness, he praised the efforts to bring peace to the nation which had been involved in a very bloody war. “Please,” Pope Francis said, “remember that with war all is lost! (...) I congratulate the signatories of the peace document, both present and absent, without exception, beginning with the President of the Republic and the heads of political parties, for having chosen the path of dialogue, for your readiness to compromise, your determination to achieve peace, your readiness to be reconciled and your will to implement what has been agreed upon.”

To you three, who have signed the peace agreement, I ask, as a brother: remain in peace. I ask you this wholeheartedly. Let us go forward. There will be many problems, but do not be fearful, go forward, solve the problems. You have begun a process: May it finish well (...) Allow me to ask you this from the heart and with my deepest sentiments.”

If you watch the video of the meeting, you will experience an awe-inspiring moment. Pope Francis, after finishing his address, bent to the ground, got on his knees and kissed the feet of each one of the three people involved in the signature. Once again, like in the apparition to Thomas, words and gestures were present to win the hearts to peace and justice!

Let us not lose heart in our work of justice and peace. What are we to do to imitate Jesus and Pope Francis in our ministry?

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