

3rd Sunday of Easter (A)
(Acts 2:14.22-33 / Luke 24:13-35)
30.04.2017

Dear brothers and sisters,

“Was it not ordained that the Christ should suffer and so enter into his glory?” These words from the Risen Lord outline a path, the path from suffering to glory, the path to life.

We all aspire to see the glory of God, to contemplate his face, to live in his presence; we all aspire to meet with the Risen Lord; we all aspire to fullness of life, to lasting happiness and peace with the Lord, with one another and with ourselves... Yes, we all aspire to enter into the Lord's glory.

But none of us wants to suffer. Nevertheless, suffering is an inevitable part of life. We were born in suffering, the labour pains of our mother and our own fight for life; and most of us will die in suffering. Between birth and death, suffering is our daily bread: sickness, betrayals, persecutions, violence, wars, natural disasters, trials of all kinds, infirmities of all sorts, mental illness, old age...

We have to consent to suffer as part of life and as the way to glory. There is no Easter without Good Friday. There is no resurrection without passion and death. There is no resurrection without Holy Saturday which is a time of waiting and expectation, a time of holy hope which can be a real trial, a purification, and even a crucifixion for our life of faith.

This is exactly what the two disciples on the road to Emmaus had not understood. They were walking along and talking together about what had happened in Jerusalem. They were evoking the souvenir of their master Jesus of Nazareth whom they loved and in whom they believed and hoped. This “Jesus had proved himself to be a great prophet by the things he said and did in the sight of God and of the whole people. But the chief priests and the leaders of the Jewish people had handed him over to be sentenced to death and had him crucified”.

The hope of these two disciples had been that Jesus would be the one to set Israel free from Roman domination, but this Jesus in whom they had placed their hope had just suffered his passion, had been crucified and had died. The two disciples were downcast. And to add to their sadness, some women had just told them that they had been to the tomb and had found it empty. And they had even seen angels who had told them that Jesus was alive!

It is at this moment that the mysterious companion who had joined them as they were walking, the Risen Lord, still unidentified by them at this moment, spoke to them and said: “You foolish men! So slow to believe the full message of the prophets: **Was it not ordained that the Christ should suffer and so enter his glory?**”

Today the Risen Lord comes to meet each one of us on the path of our lives. He tells us that there is no life without a passage through death, not only our physical death at the end of our earthly pilgrimage, but also all those deaths which we have to traverse as part of our daily lives.

We have to consent to die to ourselves day after day in order to be able to live to the full. To die to ourselves! What does this mean?

To die to ourselves means to master the impulses of hate that spring up within our hearts and replace them with acts of love; to restrain all the motions of bitterness which inhabit us while asking the Lord for the grace of a gentle heart.

To die to ourselves means affirming and confirming others instead of being jealous of them.

To die to ourselves is to choose not to lie in order to be honest and true with ourselves, with others and finally with God.

To die to ourselves means to refuse all sorts of compromising in order to remain faithful to our vocations in life, whatever the price to pay may be.

To die to ourselves means renouncing all desires of vengeance and entering into a process of forgiveness.

This is not an easy way; it requires of us a lot of courage, a lot of faith. But this is the way to life. These deaths are deaths for life.

In other words, if we want to enter into the Lord's glory, if we want to live to the full, if we want to live in accordance with God's will, we have to renounce being in control of everything at any cost, holding on to everybody and everything, holding on to ourselves and our own ways. We have to renounce striving to be God. We have to allow God to be God in our lives. At certain hours, this will be a way of suffering, but it is the way that leads to glory, the glory of God, the glory of the Risen Lord.

Was it not ordained that the Christ should suffer and so enter into his glory? May these words of the Risen Lord be a light for our lives, and a source of hope!