

2nd Sunday of Easter (C)  
(Acts 5:12-16 / John 20:19-31)  
28.04.2019  
The Lord comes

“The first day of the week Jesus came... Eight days later, Jesus came” again.

In English, as in Greek, at first glance, the verb “to come” does not seem to have a huge theological resonance. It is a common verb used to describe a simple human action.

Yet in the Gospels, this verb is charged with a deep meaning, it says something essential about our faith: we believe in a God who comes to us. By his own initiative and according to his plan, in Jesus Christ, God comes to us to reveal who he truly is. In the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, when John the Baptist looks for clarifications about Jesus’ identity, he asks: “Are you the one who is to come?” (Mt 11:3; Lk 7:19.20) And according to the letter to the Hebrews, “when Christ came into the world, he said, ‘See, God, I have come to do your will, O God’” (10:5.7).

It is clear that the mystery of God’s revelation in Jesus Christ is a mystery of visitation. God comes to us and knocks gently upon the door of our hearts until we open and allow him to accomplish his will in us (cf. Rev 3:20). This is a mystery because it goes against all that we would imagine about God. Throughout the centuries, we have always been tempted to imagine God as a divinity living far away in the sky, not really concerned by our lives unless we make a mistake, seeing him as one who manifests himself only to reprimand or punish. A kind of God that we have to appease with our sacrifices and whom, at the end of the day, we try to keep out of our daily lives.

Moreover, in Jesus Christ, God does not just come as a bystander or a spectator. As we heard in our Gospel reading, he comes in, he comes because he wants to dwell within us with his gift of peace. We have to marvel at God’s patient love, he does not come to us only once, giving up when we resist or like Thomas, when we are absent and sceptical. Our resistance or our refusals cannot deter God from desiring to come and stay with us at our house, in our hearts and in our lives (cf. Lk 19:5).

God cannot give up on us, he comes back over and over again. He may come back after eight days, or after a month... time does not matter because, for sure, he will come back.

In the same way as God came in the vulnerability of a child, in the humility of a servant, in the sufferings of an innocent man condemned to death, and in a wounded Risen Lord, he comes to us today. Are we ready to recognise Christ when he comes to us in the humility of a piece of bread and a cup of wine, in the challenging words of the Bible, in the poverty of our Church and its people?

We should not fool ourselves and believe that because we claim to be Christians, we immediately welcome Christ when he comes. The challenge faced by the Jews in Jesus’ time is now ours: “He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him” (Jn 1:11).

Christ is always bigger, greater, deeper than anything we can imagine or express with our limited words. His visits are always challenging, they question the petty image we have of him.

He comes to us in the poor and the prisoners, in the migrants and the people we do not agree with. He was coming to us in the Christians who were killed in Sri Lanka on Easter Day and in Lyra McKee who was murdered last week in Derry.

Like the apostles, the great problem for us lies in the way we deal with our fears. Rather than being open to life's challenges and ready to welcome Christ when he comes, we hide ourselves behind closed doors, behind the walls we erect in our hearts and minds. Another negative way for us to deal with our fears is to decide to be in charge and so we try to channel the Lord's visits. Obviously our attempts to decide when and how Christ should come to us are futile and pointless. We may choose to ignore him in some people because of who they are, what they do and the way they do it and yet the Lord comes to us through them.

The Lord comes today in the celebration of the Word and Sacraments, he comes as we greet one another with respect and love, he comes in the person who longs for care and attention – whether it is somebody we know or somebody we do not know.

We believe that Christ “is always he who is to come in the world and in the church” and so his “coming goes on forever” (Card. J. Daniélou). So we have daily opportunities to welcome the Lord.

Whatever way he comes to us, the Lord's visits are meant to help us to grow in his likeness and in humanity. The Lord always comes with the intention of leading us into a deeper understanding of what it means to be human. Here lies a great paradox: while he comes in the humility and the limitations of our humanity, the Lord is powerful and can achieve great things in and through us.

When we do not welcome the Lord's coming, our humanity shrinks, our hearts and minds become narrower, our world smaller.

In the same way that the Risen Lord came to the disciples in order to send them out into the world, he will come to us today in order to expand our field of vision and to stretch our hearts wider, inviting us to walk the extra mile with him.

Let us not allow our fears to hold us prisoner, the challenge is important. As the last verse of our Gospel reading reminds us, Christ comes so that we “may have life”.