

Thomas Sunday

John 20:19-31



“... that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing, you may have life in His name.”

Crumbs from Friday’s reflection on the gospel:

Eliana: “what I like is when it says that you can believe without seeing. That you do not need to see in order to believe. Many people do not see today. But it does not mean that they do not believe.”

Roma : “I think about Thomas, about how he did not believe and he asked to touch Jesus. What do we need to see or touch in order to believe today?”

Jacob: “We have so many witnesses today. What happens, since we have so much and yet we do not believe ...? It is ironic in a way, Jesus resurrects from the dead but we remember in the gospel of poor Lazarus how Abraham says that they would not believe even if someone would rise from the dead ... - It is related to listening and believing what the prophets say. If we do not listen to Moses and the prophets we will not believe in the resurrection. Jesus, on the way to Emmaus and in other resurrectional gospels, explains to the apostles about Himself being announced in the prophets and in the psalms. So we need to listen to the scripture in order to believe in the resurrection. They are directly connected.”

Henry: “Thomas was doubting Jesus' resurrection. He was not only not believing the witness of the other apostles. He witnesses everything Jesus did. He was close to him. All the healings and teachings and miracles. He was a witness of all that. He did not doubt the apostles only but more Jesus. That He resurrected from the dead. He doubted that He is the Christ.”

Carlos: “At the end of the gospel it says that all these are written that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. To believe that Jesus is Christ, the Son of God.”

Henry: "What is faith? Somebody asked me once. And I said, it is like a child who sits on a table and the father, behind him, says to the child to fall backwards and he would catch him. So the child does not see him, but he recognizes the voice. Faith is to trust the voice and to act on it. ... - Jesus was tempted in the wilderness ... In that way. The devil told him to jump because the angels would hold and carry him..."

Yes, a different voice. Not the Father. He was tempted with ego. That he could jump and make it down safely because he was the chosen one. To trust the voice of the Father whom we do not see. But the child knows it and he is obedient to it... -

The resurrection changes us. Jesus is and He is not the same after the resurrection. Definitely, the life of the apostles changed."

Carlos: "I am thinking of the apostles, how they were afraid and they stayed locked in a room. Christ comes and gives them peace. The resurrection makes us free. Of fear. It opens the door. For the sake of peace. It gives us freedom to choose and do good.

Christina: "It comes with forgiveness. We enter into the resurrection if we also forgive."

Glimpses of community life during Bright Week:

On Wednesday morning, P., an old Jewish man in his 80's, was waiting to talk over a cup of tea or coffee. He waited while listening to the paschal canon being sung in the chapel at the mission, by voices that cannot read many notes. P. thought it was beautiful. He is a professional musician, playing piano for a living. He was touched by the voices mingling with the bells. He really thought it was a beauty he had not heard before. And that beauty touched him personally.

On Tuesday morning, Jasmine (which is also the name of the incense we use for Pascha), a woman who works at night on the street, and is usually disturbing and loud, came in and asked about the petals and the bay leaves scattered on the floor. For whatever reason, she was quiet for two days in a row. She offered to share her juice and asked for more food. Johan said he never saw her like that - peaceful. The miracle lasted until Saturday when she returned to her old self...

The Paschal hours were sung and read several times during the week. Jacob was guiding people and praying with them. At the last reading, on Saturday, he ended up having a headache because the Saturday crew was yelling too much, he said, with everyone trying to cover the rest of the voices. But otherwise it was beautiful, with different people helping. On Friday, Numa, Tyler and Alia did the last prayer. They came early in the morning for liturgy and they spent the whole day

at the mission. Numa took the last red egg from the basket and ate it at the end of the day. The rest of the eggs had been shared with people throughout the week. A sign that innocence is always hungry for blessed food.

On Wednesday morning, L. was taken to the hospital because his condition is worsening. The doctors told him and E. to ask people to come see him that day because it might be his last one.

But L. said: "We are going to surprise everyone. Today is not a good day to die." His vulnerable physical condition served as a reminder of Holy Week and the cross. He was thirsty every few minutes, asking E. to wet a napkin and put it on his lips. The staff treated him with a cold attitude and a kind of professional indifference that tells the one lying on his death bed that he does not matter much, since he is dying anyways. E.'s love and care stood out when she embraced and kissed him saying: "I said I was going to stay with him until the end. And I will stay until the end." The scene looked like the epitaphion that Frank changed on Friday. Just that the angels, the doctors and nurses at the hospital, seemed more detached and impersonal.

On Wednesday evening we had a memorial service and a meal which we had mistakenly booked on that the bright week, but it was too late to cancel it. It proved that the one who asked for the memorial was I., who had come for the first time at the mission in 2021 when her husband had just died two months before. She had come at the time with her four children. They had all prayed and served at the mission only a couple of months after their father's death. They were all adolescents or younger. This time, she came to pray for her husband's soul on Pascha.

"Great is our Lord, and great is His power.

Praise the Lord, for the Lord is good." (Prokeimenon. Mode 4 Psalm 146.5;134.3)

There is a time at the resurrection, when Jesus appears and vanishes from our sight. And then, a time when we do not know if it is Him or the gardener. Or the stranger who feeds us with good food and goodness. Or the stranger who walks on the road of sorrow and disbelief with us in order to become the witness of the joy foretold by the prophets.

And another time, when He reveals himself in the midst of the apostles. The time we live today. When they can touch and handle Him to see that it is him. This witness from very close is directly connected to the marks of the cross imprinted in Christ who died on the cross.

In the time we live today we can witness the resurrection from very close . It is a time when the cross is magnified in the life of the people, in the form of oppression and violent death that so many people experience today. Forgetfulness and betrayal. Lack of faith that wounds the purity of many hearts. Violence that is discretionary and destructive and illogic. In the brokenness and suffering of humanity, Christ's resurrection gives us not only a glimpse at the joy of a life that cannot be comprehended by death anymore, but also a personal and direct contact with the peace that comes with it. We see the love of the Father for the world and the people today. We can see and touch the hounds that have been healed by it.

We see it from very close, in the wounds of those who suffered greatly and today love and forgive much. We see it in the longing for peace of the young people and their faith in the truth. In their silent suffering and undisclosed hope. In the presence, very early in the morning, of those who look for a stranger to embrace and care for. In the breaking of bread and sharing of food, of the innocent one and of the sinful one, who eat from the same basket the blessed and sanctified paschal eggs. In the 33 languages at the Vespers of Love, where the good news was proclaimed. In the gratitude of a single mother who brought her son to church on Pascha so she can say in her own language that “Christ is risen!”

We see it in the loneliness and hunger of the teenager who came from a poor country to go to school in a rich one in order to find out how lonely life can become in Canada, for the young and the old. And then he discovered the goodness of service and the friendship of the people who live with disabilities. We see it in the anxiety of the one who was afraid to leave his room and today receives communion and prays in the chapel. We see it in the joy of a homeless woman, who does not know how to say “Christ is risen!” but is waiting for the encounter with faith. So when she sees the beauty of the chapel and the blooming cherry branches she feels the need to share her name and she expresses an honest desire to return.

We see it in the love of E. for L. on the hospital bed. We see it in J.'s good will when he prays with all the people. We see it in the tears of J. and in the service of many. In the new struggles and challenges of people who do much good today. In the joy of a child who returned as a teenager at the mission, when he realised that he was still remembered and had not been forgotten. We see it in the new burdens carried by the people who do much good at the mission. In their light spirit when they carry the light yoke. We see it in our heart where a fire is kindled, and there is faith that we have been forgiven.

In a faithless generation we see from very close the joy of the resurrection and the peace that comes with that. Roma thought that in the faithless generation in which we live today, the resurrection would not be easily believed. And yet, it is in this faithless generation that we receive the most of the witness. Because in every human being a bud of light has been blossoming. And we can see and believe and be a witness of it. A generation that knows the taste of the cross, even out of its own sins, is the generation that becomes the witness of the resurrection. Just like in the time of the apostles.

We are the witnesses of it so we “may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing, you may have life in His name.”

Just as we see on a macro level the destruction of human life, in the shape of an evil that thinks big and acts big and advertises and magnifies its own strength through all media channels. Within the intimacy of human life, the light of the resurrection becomes the new creation. Where every human reality touched by suffering and unbelief is loved personally and dearly by Christ who is risen from the dead. Within the intimacy of the soul and the dynamic of communal life, the new creation has a new dynamis. It spreads and embraces those who suffered on the cross, because of their sins or because of their innocence. It embraces and gives them peace in order to render us our freedom. The more evil stretches humanity and breaks it through suffering and oppression, the more humanity becomes transparent to the love of God. Our inner eye is set upon Him. And if love has our attention, our heart could not resist to it: *It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.* (Hebrew 10:31)



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