

### **3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Easter**

The Risen Christ opens our minds to understand the truth that as per God's plan of salvation and the testimony of the Scriptures, glory can come only through suffering, cross and death.

Just as Jesus opened the minds of his disciples, today also he opens our minds to understand the centrality and the necessity of the cross in our life. Cross was an integral part of Jesus' life and will remain so in the life of his disciples. It is no wonder that the shadow of the cross is in the form of sacrifices and self-denials to be made; suffering, opposition, rejection, humiliation and persecution to be endured always, for those who faithfully continue, the prophetic mission of Christ.

It is inevitable that anyone who works for God with total commitment and speaks for him or stands for his cause will face the same suffering. These crosses are essential to bring about a new life and transformation. God always vindicates the path of righteousness chosen by his prophets and sees to it that the truth they proclaim or uphold will finally win.

Can we totally escape from the shadow of the cross? Cross is both necessary and inevitable: (1) for a personal conversion, because we need to go through the pain of dying to our selfishness/egoism or renouncing our sinful attitudes; (2) for social change and progress, because we may have to abandon some of our deep-rooted and age-old social structures/ customs/ traditions and give up evil practices that block such a change; (3) for maintaining an atmosphere of love and unity in our families, because we need to give up our own self-interests and sacrifice our time for genuine relationships; (4) for fighting or protesting against social evils, injustice, crimes, discrimination, etc., because we may have to face opposition, criticism, pressure and threats for doing it ; (5) for bringing peace and reconciliation, because it demands the pain of sacrificing our self-interests and the humiliation of forgiving a wrongdoer; etc.

When we go through the valley of darkness, it is very difficult to understand that the crosses in our life are signs of God's love and plan, and that he wants to bring something good out of them. This is what Jesus was trying to explain both to the travelers who were going to Emmaus and to the eleven apostles and their companions as per today's gospel. A question haunts the minds of every virtuous person even today, just as it might have haunted the disciples at his crucifixion: "Why should this particular tragedy/ misfortune/ terminal illness/ fatal accident/ injustice/ nightmare/ trauma happen to me? Do I deserve this trouble? What wrong have I done?"

Just as Jesus said that it was necessary for the Messiah to suffer the agony of the cross in order to attain glory, can we turn back to our past life and say about a tragic/ sorrowful event or a bitter experience we had gone through, "It was necessary for me; it was for my good; I learned a lot from it; today I am what I am because of it?" Taken in this spirit, even our fault turns out to be a "happy fault" as the Easter Proclamation (called '*Exultet*') says. It proclaims that Adam's sin was truly necessary, because it earned for us a great Redeemer.

Like the disciples, we too have quite a few doubts and fears. We doubt whether our present condition will improve; whether a problem will be solved; whether all our efforts will be fruitful; whether our plans will succeed; whether God will take care of our needs; whether there is a God who allows the just to suffer and why does he allow it; whether we shall see a corruption-free State; whether the terrorist activities and the rate of violence/crime will come down in the world; whether global warming and climate change will be contained; etc.

When we are tuned to the voice of the living Lord coming to us through his Word, we get his invitation to move from doubt to faith in him. Just as he told his disciples as per today's text, he tells us also: "Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts" (24:38)? Then he invites us to experience his powerful presence in the Eucharist with all the tenderness: "Touch me and see" (24:39).