



From A Bishop's Journal (643)

His Mystery Enlightens Our Life

Level IV of the family- and parish-based catechetics programme introduces us to vital accounts from the Gospel. We know that the evangelists did not write a “biography” of Jesus as we would write one today. Moved by the Holy Spirit, they reported facts and words to enlighten the lives of Christ’s disciples. Let us take a look at a few of these accounts.

Martha, Mary, and Lazarus

Jesus probably first met Martha, Mary, and Lazarus when going on pilgrimage to Jerusalem. It was at their house that he enjoyed praying with them and sharing the Word of God, and taking time to rest. Mary could have spent hours on end listening to Jesus, though Mary’s sister Martha would have liked her sister share with her the daily housekeeping tasks. “Mary has chosen the better portion and she shall not be deprived of it.” The account of Lazarus’s death is full of surprises: Jesus could not make it to the home of Lazarus for four days, and his friend had already been in the tomb for that length of time. Jesus still wanted to come, to mourn his friend. Martha made a profession of faith, and Jesus’ great revelation was proclaimed: “I am the resurrection and the life: whoever believes in me, though he should die, will come to life; and whoever is alive and believes in me will never die.” Then Jesus prayed his Father: “Father, I thank you for having heard me.” He then cried out in a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out!” Jesus gave life to one who had already died. Many Jews who had witnessed what Jesus had done believed in him, while the high priests and the Pharisees called a meeting of the Sanhedrin to discuss Jesus’ death. John’s account of this event supported the faith of the first Christian communities. Henceforth, no human situation, not even death itself could turn them away from the one who had proclaimed himself the Resurrection and the Life. Even today, this story helps us through our mourning and all kinds of trials. Jesus tells us: “I tell you: if you believe you shall see the glory of God!”

The Call of the Apostles

The first Christian communities must certainly have had questions about their beginnings, about their Church: How was it that some of them had been followers of Jesus, and that some had been chosen as apostles? How had they recognised Jesus as the Messiah? The Gospels introduce us discretely to Jesus’s first call. He was walking along the shore of the sea of Galilee, when he came across Simon

and Andrew: “Come after me and I will make you fishers of men.” They immediately abandoned their nets and became his followers. Jesus then saw James and his brother John: Jesus called them and they immediately followed him.” John himself described how Jesus had called Simon and Andrew, Philip and Nathanael. He had looked at them and said: “Come and see.” When it is a matter of calling the apostles, the evangelists point out that Jesus spent the night praying before calling them to be with him and go and proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom of God. Every member of the community believed that the risen Jesus continued to call people, that he was with his Church forever, and that he or she was sent to be with Jesus and proclaim his Gospel. God’s calls are irrevocable, and Jesus’ prayer accompanies everyone who is called. Even today, each baptised and confirmed person must recognise that he or she is “called”, “chosen”, and “consecrated.”

The Rich Young Man

If there is a question that is as timely today as in the days of Jesus, it is this one: “What must I do to share in everlasting life?” This question can take different forms: What must I do to be happy? What must I do to succeed in life? Matthew, Mark, and Luke tell of Jesus’ meeting with a young man who had many worldly possessions. “If you want to have eternal life, keep the commandments,” Jesus told him. “Which ones?” the young man asked. And Jesus listed five commandments: “You shall not commit adultery. You shall not kill. You shall not steal. You shall not bear false witness. Honour your father and your mother.” And Jesus specified, “You shall love your neighbour as yourself.” The young man replied that he had kept these commandments, so Jesus said: “There is one thing further you must do. Sell all you have and give to the poor. You will have treasure in heaven. Then come and follow me.” To Christians wanting a taste of eternal life, Jesus repeats his teaching on the commandments, on the love of neighbour, and on detachment from worldly possessions. To a society marked by overconsumption of all kinds, Jesus repeats the same message of simplicity and sharing. To a society marked by injustice and dishonesty, Jesus repeats the commandments of life, justice, and love.

Caiaphas the “Prophet”

The raising of Lazarus did not pass unnoticed, and the highest members of the hierarchy were greatly worried. “This man – Jesus – performs all sorts of signs. If we let him go on like this, the whole world will believe in him. Then the Romans will come in and sweep away our sanctuary and our nation.” Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, addressed them at this point: “You have no understanding whatever! Can you not see that it is better for you to have one man die than to have the whole nation destroyed?” Saint John, who tells the story, stresses that the words were not Caiaphas’s own, but since he was high priest that year he “prophesied” that Jesus needed to die for the people, and not only for them but to gather into one all the dispersed children of God. It was on that day that the authorities decided Jesus had to die. The first communities wanted to know how Jesus’ death had been plotted and how he had been killed. Many recognised that Jesus had worked great deeds, but several among them had no faith in him. It is a mysterious situation, not to

acknowledge Jesus in one's life. We read this words, in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus: "If they do not listen to Moses and the prophets, they will not be convinced even if one should rise from the dead." It is a mysterious situation, to wish for the unity of all nations, the unity of all humankind through the constant presence of the Risen One. "I am with you always, until the end of the world."

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