

Homily by Fr. Gabor 2019.04.28

When I was younger I used to worry quite a lot about things, because I used to be a perfectionist. Then when I was ordained I worried about parish ministry, because I wanted to make sure that everyone's needs are met, so I stressed out myself so much so that I had a panic attack in November 2003. The bishop doesn't know about it! However over the many years since I have been a priest I have learnt to hear Jesus' encouraging words: 'Do not worry, everything will be all right' and it took another few years to actually take it seriously when Jesus spoke to me. Thanks God the Lord Jesus has been very patient with me all through the 15 years since I have been a priest, and he speaks to me with words of comfort and encouragement every time when I start worrying about something, but today I take His voice and His messages much more seriously, and I haven't had an panic attack since 2004.

Jesus spoke words of courage to His fearful disciples when he appeared to them, as we heard in the Gospel reading. They needed this, because first of all they were profoundly bereaved over the loss of Jesus. The bereavement of some of them was so profound that they didn't recognise Him when the Lord physically appeared to them, see for example Mary of Magdala and the disciples who were travelling to Emmaus. You can imagine how shocked they must have been. To be bereaved and shocked is a natural reaction to the loss of someone with whom you had a close heart to heart relationship. But at the same time this shock and bereavement can distort our sense of reality, and in the worst case even our physical eyesight. We experience different types of shocks, such as abandonment, rejection by a parent or a friend, damaging remarks by others, unfulfilled expectations, etc. throughout our lives, beginning from childhood, but the problem is that our spiritual enemy uses these negative experiences for its own plans against us and twists our sense of truth and reality and so we may develop negative attitudes. This is how for example negative self-image, distorted God image, inherent fears or lack of forgiveness towards someone can lead to negative attitudes.

The greatest obstacle to seeing the fullness of reality is fear. Fear and bereavement and unfulfilled expectations: are the most prevalent so called 'veils' that cover the eyes of the disciples right after the death of Christ. So what Jesus does right after the resurrection is that He removes these veils. In today's Gospel story Jesus removes the spiritual and emotional veils of bereavement and unfulfilled expectations by simply appearing to the disciples physically, then by speaking words of encouragement 'Peace be with you!' and by breathing the Spirit of courage into their hearts.

Thomas' eyes are covered not only with the Spirit of profound bereavement, loss, unfulfilled expectations and fear, but also by lack of faith and trust in his fellow disciples' words. He probably thinks that they only saw a ghost. So Jesus appears to him as well and allows him to touch his physical body to believe that his fellow disciples didn't see a ghost, but Jesus' full, physical reality.

Although most of the veils are removed, the veil of fear still remains on the eyes of the disciples, but very importantly fear is only removed when the disciples make the first step to go among the public at the first Pentecost event. Only then they receive the fullness of the Holy Spirit, the greatest blessing of the Father, and their fear is removed. They go completely public praising the Lord in the temple and giving witness about the wonderful things the Lord Jesus had done.

The events after the resurrection are renewal events in their essence. For renewal many different veils have to be removed. We are also after the resurrection of Christ, and I am sure the Lord wants to renew us also and remove the veils from our eyes that prevent us from seeing and experiencing the truths about who we are in the eyes of our merciful and loving Father. Only when these veils are removed can our present negative attitudes be transformed. We just have to be honest about these veils, repent our negative attitudes, ask for forgiveness for them, renounce them and receive the great blessing of the Father, the truth that we are His beloved children.