



40th European Meeting of Young Adults

“Do not be afraid!”

The angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples: ‘He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.’ Now I have told you.” So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples. Suddenly Jesus met them. “Greetings,” he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him. Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me..” [...] Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

(Matthew 28: 5-20)

Meditation for December (No. 6)

“Do not be afraid!”; “Do not be afraid!” What Joseph hears at the very beginning of the Gospel of Matthew, the women hear at the very end. Today, this is also what we hear: “Do not be afraid!”

“Do not be afraid!” With these words, an encounter has begun for Joseph and the women. They understand that God is present in their challenges and that he opens a path for them. The Bible doesn’t claim that everything will always be fine, but it tries to tell us that we do not have to confront our difficulties alone.

In our previous text, it was Jesus who was confronted with anguish and hardship; the disciples left him all alone. While he prayed, they slept. When he was arrested, they fled. The women do not leave the man who has died on the cross. They come to see the tomb of someone for whom there is no hope left. The disciples distanced themselves from this difficulty and this hopelessness; the women come close to it. And they receive the message: Do not be afraid! He is risen!

In this story there are three encounters and three missions: the angel sends the women to the disciples; then Jesus sends the women “to his brothers”; and finally Jesus sends the disciples “to all nations.” No one discovers the message of the resurrection alone and no one can keep it for themselves. It is a message that is received in an encounter and that invites us to create new ones.

The resurrection doesn't mean there will no longer be difficulties in our lives or no more suffering in the world. But the first Christians, starting with the women and the disciples in our text, realize progressively that Jesus had faced his anguish and suffering alone so that we would never again be alone in our anguish and suffering. Little by little they understand that hope has entered into the despair and that Jesus' death has become a source of life.

The first reaction of the women and of the disciples is a mixture of great joy and of fear, or even a mixture of adoration and of doubt. But Matthew doesn't end his story by looking at the reaction of the disciples; he directs our attention to the last words of Jesus. The disciples who had left him alone are now sent to make disciples of all nations. Jesus wants his disciples to share with all nations the new life he came to give us, through baptism and teaching his commandments.

This mission and this life are carried by his presence. He received the power, and he will be present. In the middle of these difficulties and the distress of the world, the Reign of God has already begun. The resurrection is this: a definite beginning, and the dynamic of a presence til the end of the age. One presence both for days of joy and days of distress; one presence that is a source of hope.

Questions for sharing in small groups

- ▶ “Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.” (Hebrews 2:18) – How do I understand these words?
- ▶ In what encounters does Jesus come to me? Towards whom does he send me?