
« HOLY SPIRIT, TEACH US ABOUT JESUS »



For the fourth time in as many years I am sending you a pastoral letter on the occasion of the Feast of Pentecost. This time, in a period when we are preparing to celebrate the Jubilee of the Year 2000 dedicated to Jesus, I want to point out to you, by referring to a few events we have lived together, the ever-marvellous presence of Jesus. This is not a learned theological paper on the identity of Jesus but the presentation of a few points of reference to help us better understand the physical, spiritual, or sacramental presence of Jesus. The Holy Spirit, Memory of Jesus, will bring back to our memories everything he has taught, and he will help us recognise him at the heart of God's Word, through people and communities, through sacraments and events, because the kingdom of Jesus is already among us.

« WHERE IS JESUS? »

I have often related this story that took place during the summer of 1996, when a child asked me where Jesus is, at which I hastened to answer that he was in his heart. At that, the child quickly came back with the rejoinder, « Could my dentist see him? And could I see him if I had eyes inside of me? » Today I would like to develop this rejoinder a bit more. One of the most precious gifts we receive at baptism is that of faith which helps us discern the presence of Jesus in us and in our world. It is these inner eyes that help us take a second look on what we see and what we experience.

AT THE HEART OF THE WORD

Word of God, Word of God made man, Jesus is the Gospel of the Father: Jesus himself is the Good News who came to introduce us to God and to give us his Holy Spirit. The apostle Paul appropriately says, in his letter to his beloved Timothy: « *You then, my child, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus; and what you have heard from me through many witnesses entrust to faithful people who will be able to teach others as well... Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, a descendant of David... If we have died with him, we will also live with him; if we endure, we will also reign with him.* » [2 Timothy 2:1-2, 8, 11-12] That is why I encourage you to take time, this year, to read and deepen your understanding of one of the Gospels. In the diocese of Rome, for example, each family has been given a copy of the Gospel of Mark. In the gospels you will be getting more than just biblical data or facts: it is there that you will encounter Jesus Christ himself, the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Doesn't the Letter to the Hebrews remind us of this wonderful revelation: « *Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by the Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created the worlds. He is the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being, and he sustains all things by his powerful word. When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.* » [Hebrews 1:1-4]

IN OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS

To every baptised person in our midst I would like to repeat the words of songwriter John Littleton: « *You are the body of Christ! You are the Blood of Christ! You are the Love of Christ! So, what have you done with him?* » The apostle Paul said something similar when he tirelessly repeated that we are members of the body of Christ: he had

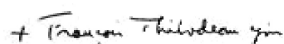
been given this revelation on the road to Damascus; Jesus had identified himself to the disciples that Paul was persecuting. In several of his letters Paul will repeat in different ways that the baptised are the Body of Christ. « Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? » [1 Corinthians 6:15] If he entreats us to acknowledge the dignity of every person it is because we are all members of the Body of Christ. Baptised sisters and brothers, you are presence of the risen Christ in the midst of the world.

« I WAS HUNGRY »

During this decade consecrated to eliminating poverty the Canadian Bishops published an important message to thank these Christians who come to the aid of the poor and who work at building up a more equitable and fraternal world. It is in remembering the example of Jesus who came to bring good news to the poor and who identified with the most deprived that the bishops wrote that this ministry was a sign of hope for our world. « *Just as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.* » [Matthew 25:40] Christian communities have been urged to identify with the poor in their milieu and to use the most appropriate measures to come to their help. This is a commitment that is both social and economic, cultural and political: it is a powerful challenge to our Christian faith. Here in this country, over six million of our brothers and sisters live in poverty, and in the Third World, over six billion people live in sub-human conditions: this is an insult to our God and an atrocity against our brothers and sisters. Brothers and sisters living in distress, you are presence of Jesus the Poor in our midst.

« I WAS SICK »

When I visit homes for the elderly and hospitals I cannot help but be reminded of Jesus telling us, « *I was sick and you took care of me.* » [Matthew 25:36] He identified with the afflicted and gave a new meaning to suffering. He took our pains on himself and made of them a promise of everlasting life. Pain that is our lot in this world cannot compare with the glory promised us in heaven. Our world sighs in the hope that all will become a new heaven and a new earth. In the midst of health and social welfare reforms, new psychological problems compound the already-existing physical ones. Some cuts are immoderately painful. Sick brothers and sisters, you are presence of the suffering Jesus among us.



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