



The Holy See

EASTER VIGIL

HOMILY OF POPE FRANCIS

Vatican Basilica

Holy Saturday, 19 April 2014

Video

Photo Gallery

The Gospel of the resurrection of Jesus Christ begins with the journey of the women to the tomb at dawn on the day after the Sabbath. They go to the tomb to honour the body of the Lord, but they find it open and empty. A mighty angel says to them: “Do not be afraid!” (*Mt* 28:5) and orders them to go and tell the disciples: “He has been raised from the dead, and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee” (v. 7). The women quickly depart and on the way Jesus himself meets them and says: “Do not fear; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me” (v. 10). “Do not be afraid”, “do not fear”: these are words that encourage us to open our hearts to receive the message.

After the death of the Master, the disciples had scattered; their faith had been utterly shaken, everything seemed over, all their certainties had crumbled and their hopes had died. But now that message of the women, incredible as it was, came to them like a ray of light in the darkness. The news spread: Jesus is risen as he said. And then there was his command to go to *Galilee*; the women had heard it twice, first from the angel and then from Jesus himself: “Let them go to Galilee; there they will see me”. “Do not fear” and “go to Galilee”.

Galilee is *the place where they were first called, where everything began!* To return there, to return to the place where they were originally called. Jesus had walked along the shores of the lake as the fishermen were casting their nets. He had called them, and they left everything and followed him (cf. *Mt* 4:18-22).

To return to Galilee means *to re-read* everything on the basis of the cross and its victory, fearlessly: “do not be afraid”. To re-read everything – Jesus’ preaching, his miracles, the new community, the excitement and the defections, even the betrayal – to re-read everything starting from the end, which is a new beginning, *from this supreme act of love*.

For each of us, too, there is a “Galilee” at the origin of our journey with Jesus. “To go to Galilee” means something beautiful, it means rediscovering our baptism as a living fountainhead, drawing new energy from the sources of our faith and our Christian experience. To return to Galilee means above all to return to that blazing light with which God’s grace touched me at the start of the journey. From that flame I can light a fire for today and every day, and bring heat and light to my brothers and sisters. That flame ignites a humble joy, a joy which sorrow and distress cannot dismay, a good, gentle joy.

In the life of every Christian, after baptism there is also another “Galilee”, *a more existential “Galilee”*: the experience of a *personal encounter with Jesus Christ* who called me to follow him and to share in his mission. In this sense, returning to Galilee means treasuring in my heart the living memory of that call, when Jesus passed my way, gazed at me with mercy and asked me to follow him. To return there means reviving the memory of that moment when his eyes met mine, the moment when he made me realize that he loved me.

Today, tonight, each of us can ask: *What is my Galilee?* I need to remind myself, to go back and remember. *Where is my Galilee?* Do I remember it? Have I forgotten it? Seek and you will find it! There the Lord is waiting for you. Have I gone off on roads and paths which made me forget it? Lord, help me: tell me what my Galilee is; for you know that I want to return there to encounter you and to let myself be embraced by your mercy. Do not be afraid, do not fear, return to Galilee!

The Gospel is very clear: we need to go back there, to see Jesus risen, and to become witnesses of his resurrection. This is not to go back in time; it is not a kind of nostalgia. It is returning to our first love, in order to *receive the fire* which Jesus has kindled in the world and to bring that fire to all people, to the very ends of the earth. Go back to Galilee, without fear!

“Galilee of the Gentiles” (*Mt 4:15; Is 8:23*)! Horizon of the Risen Lord, horizon of the Church; intense desire of encounter... Let us be on our way!