

FAITH THAT BECOMES PARTICIPATION

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

There is a difference between believing something to be true and becoming part of it.

In the Gospel today from John 20, we meet the disciples gathered behind closed doors, afraid, uncertain, and unsure of what comes next. They have already heard the news that Christ is risen, but that truth has not yet fully changed how they live. They are still hiding. They are still holding back. And then the risen Christ comes and stands among them, not outside, not at a distance, but in their midst. He says, "Peace be with you," and shows them his hands and his side. The resurrection is no longer just something they have heard; it becomes something they encounter.

But Thomas is not there. When the others tell him, "We have seen the Lord," he cannot believe it, not because he is weak in faith, but because he is not yet part of the experience. He is outside of it. And so he says that unless he sees and touches, he will not believe. A week later, when Thomas is finally with the community, the risen Christ comes again. And this time, Thomas responds, "My Lord and my God." What changed? It was not only that Thomas saw. It was that he was now present. He was no longer absent. He was no longer outside. He had become part of the community that encounters the risen Christ.

Faith, then, is not only about believing that Christ is risen. It is about becoming part of the life that his resurrection creates.

We see this also in the first reading from Acts 2, where Peter stands before the people and proclaims the resurrection. He does not simply announce an idea; he calls people into a new reality. The resurrection gathers people, forms them, and draws them into a shared life. And in the second reading from 1 Peter 1, we hear these words: "By his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." A living hope, not a distant hope, not a passive hope, but a hope that lives, that moves, that takes shape in how we live and how we belong.

Faith that remains only in the mind can stay comfortable. It can remain private and untouched. But faith that is alive will always draw us into participation. It brings us into relationship, into responsibility, into shared life.

And this is where the question becomes very real for us. It is possible to believe in the risen Christ, and yet remain at a distance. It is possible to come, to listen, to observe, and yet not fully take part in the life of the community. It is possible to be near, and yet not belong. But the resurrection does not call us to remain behind closed doors. It calls us to step into the life that God is creating among us.

A community does not become alive simply because people gather. It becomes alive when people begin to take part, when they begin to share in its life, its direction, its responsibilities, and its future. And perhaps this is the quiet invitation of the Gospel today, not only to say, "My Lord and my God," but to live in such a way that those words take shape in our choices, in our presence, and in our participation.

Because the truth is this: a community is not lost in a single moment or decision. It is slowly weakened when participation becomes optional, when belonging becomes distant, when responsibility is carried only by a few. But the opposite is also true. A community is strengthened, renewed, and sustained when people choose, in small and concrete ways, to take their place within it, to be present, to be involved, and to be part of what God is doing.

And so the question for us today is not only, "Do we believe that Christ is risen?" The deeper question is this: are we willing to become part of the life that his resurrection brings? Are we willing to step forward, not as spectators, but as participants? Are we willing to take our place in the community where Christ continues to stand among us and say, "Peace be with you"?

Faith that becomes participation is not always dramatic. Often, it is quiet and steady, seen in simple acts of presence, commitment, and shared responsibility. But it is there that the resurrection becomes real, and it is there that the Church becomes alive.

Amen.