

B057 Dominican in Albis, scilicet in octavis Paschae. Sermon I

**St. Vincent Ferrer, O.P. Sermon 1 for Whitsunday, the Octave of Easter,
on John 20:26ff**

Douay translation Jn. 20:26-29

26 And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them. Jesus cometh, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said: Peace be to you. 27 Then he saith to Thomas: Put in thy finger hither, and see my hands; and bring hither thy hand, and put it into my side; and be not faithless, but believing. 28 Thomas answered, and said to him: My Lord, and my God. 29 Jesus saith to him: Because thou hast seen me, Thomas, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and have believed.

"And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them. Jesus came..." Jn 20:26.

The proposed word according to the historical or literal sense [of scripture] speaks of the coming of Christ and of his appearance which happened, so he might convert the unbelieving apostle, Thomas. Lest Thomas be damned, Christ again after eight days appeared to him, and this is what the theme says: "And after eight days again..." But according to the mystical and spiritual sense the theme speaks of the coming of Christ to the soul to justify it of sin, and for giving grace and blessing to it. And now in the present sermon I wish to explain these two senses.

According to the first sense, history of the gospel is literally called literal. Note he breathes saying, "Receive the holy Spirit," (Jn 20:22). Breath has two qualities, it is warm and moist. The Holy Spirit gives these two. First he gives the warmth of love and devotion. Second he gives the moisture of contrition and tears. These two are the effect of the Holy Spirit – Christ breathes, implying that the Holy Spirit proceeds not only from the Father, but also from him. He gives to the apostles and priests the power of forgiving sins, saying, "Whose sins you forgive," etc. By this commission of Christ priests can forgive sins instrumentally, for it is Christ who principally forgives sins.

At this apparition of Christ, Thomas was not with the other disciples. They said to Thomas, "We have seen the Lord," (v.25) He replied, saying, "Unless I shall see in his hands," etc. As if he were saying, "He has now risen? I certainly do not believe. Because when he hung on the cross still alive and the Jews were saying to him, 'If he is the king of Israel,' etc., they were offering him their conversion, he was not able to descend from the cross. How therefore now dead could he come out of the sealed and guarded tomb? I say to you that unless I shall see," etc. See how filled with doubt and unbelief Thomas was, so that if he had died in such unbelief, he would have been eternally damned.

Think about it, and I tell you, perhaps all through the whole week the apostles worked to convince him. Even the Virgin Mary and Mary Magdalen. Thomas would have been embarrassed perhaps to deny it in the presence of the Virgin Mary, but behind her back he was possibly asking, "Would not a mother tell a lie on behalf of her son?" Christ saw that neither the apostles, nor his mother were able to convince him. So Christ himself, moved by mercy, after

eight days from his first appearance, came and the doors closed entered saying, "Peace be to you."

Note this secret, that Jesus saluted the apostles in today's gospel three times, to teach that if every good of the community ought to be conserved in good, it ought to have three peace's. First between the greater and lesser, by supporting the lesser and honoring the greater. Second, between the principals themselves there ought to be concord and charity, so that in good charity they pursue the common good. Third, peace between the ordinary people, that they be in harmony among themselves. So he said three times "Peace be to you, peace be to you, peace be to you."

Note how Christ was able to speak to Thomas. "Were not you the one who refused to believe my resurrection?" Thomas replies, "Yes, Lord but I believe you are my God and my Lord." O what shame he had over his unbelief. Thomas, when he saw Christ and Christ called him saying, "Put your finger," etc., Thomas believed. The Gloss cites Augustine, that Thomas preferred not to touch because he was already believing immediately when he saw Christ. But Blessed Gregory says that Christ insisted that he touch the place of the nails, so no one could have any doubt. And Thomas said, "I believe, Lord." To whom Christ said, "Because you have seen me Thomas, you believed," etc. He did not say "because you touched." I say to you that "blessed are they who have not seen, and have believed." So the theme is clear according to the historical and literal sense.

Now it is necessary to explain it according to the mystical and spiritual sense. For which it must be known that two works are at the top through which Christ comes into a creature through grace. He comes first through baptism. Second through penance. If indeed Christ is lost after he had come to a creature through baptism, after eight days he comes again through penance. I say first that Christ through grace comes into creature through baptism, because before baptism Christ is not in a creature through grace. Moreover I say to you that before baptism the creature is the dwelling place of demons.

I say that Adam and Eve because of the sin they committed are made slaves to the devil. Just as when two soldiers fight a duel in a closed stadium, and one says, "Woe to me. I hand myself over to you." He is made slave of the other. So it was between those two soldiers, namely Adam and the devil, in the closed stadium of the terrestrial paradise, there was a duel, where Adam was defeated and handed himself over to the devil by consent. Moreover he was captured with his wife. And the law is such that if the slaves beget children, even the children are slaves. So of Adam. Authority, Isaiah 5, "Therefore is my people," that is the human race, "led away captive, because they had not knowledge," (Isa 5:13). Note, "because they had not knowledge," because the sin of Adam came from the desire of knowledge, because the serpent said, "You shall be as gods, knowing good and evil," (Gen 3:5). It is clear therefore that all were enslaved to the devil.

How is the devil expelled? I reply, through baptism. Therefore when the creature ought to be baptized, the priest does not permit him to enter the church until he is conjured or exorcized saying, "I exorcize you, etc. Go out accursed devil." From this the conclusion is inferred, that all Jews and infidels belong to the devil [sunt daemoniaci], because they are not exorcized. Therefore in baptism he is expelled, so when driven out and the room cleaned, Christ comes

through grace. Behold the first coming of Christ in the creature. Authority. "This is he that came by water and blood, Jesus Christ: not by water only, but by water and blood." (1 Jn 5:6). Note: "by water and blood," If it is said, "I was often at baptisms and I saw no blood there," I reply: that by virtue of the blood of Christ baptism has its power and efficacy. Augustine. "Such is the power of that water, that it touches the body, and the soul is washed," which is to say by the blood of Christ.

But see, after baptism when we sin, we drive out Christ by the uncleanness of our sins. He is not a pig, that he would prefer to stay in the mud of lust. An then the infernal devil pigs would return and Christ would withdraw, as he said, "And when an unclean spirit is gone out of a man," etc. (Mt 12:53, & Lk 11:24). Note: "and the last state of that man in made worse than the first," (v. 45), because the actual sins are intensively worse than original sin, as St. Thomas says [III, q. 1, a. 4](#), because it has more of the reason of being voluntary, although original sin is extensively worse.

I repeat, the way the devil is expelled is through the conversion of penance. See how divine providence provides that through humble penance and a devout conscience one is purified and cleaned, and the devil is driven out. So, James "Resist the devil, and he will fly from you," (James 4:7).

So the theme says, "After eight days again," etc. Here eight days are the works of penance, which, when completed, Christ comes again.

The first day is recognition of sin,
Second, contrition of the heart,
Third, confession by word,
Fourth, correction of life,
Fifth, forgiveness of injuries,
Sixth, restitution of debts,
Seventh, reparation of someone's good name,
Eighth, Eucharistic communion.

About these the theme says, "After eight days again Jesus came."

I say first, that the first day is the recognition of sin, when a man because of the clarity of divine grace comes to know his sins saying, "O, I am a wretched religious, and I have not observed obedience, poverty, nor chastity, nor the regulations of our order regarding food, and the habit and bowing in the chapel," etc. Behold the first day. The same for clergy as well as lay people. And after realizing [their sinfulness] they can say with the Apostle Paul to the Romans, "The night is passed, and the day is at hand," (Rom 13:12)

The second day is the contrition of the heart. What good would it do to recognize the gravest sins, unless they would be displeasing? This is against those who celebrate when they commit evil etc. It is necessary therefore after the recognition of [your] sins, to be sorry and weep out of contrition, just as, for example, the boy falling into a mud puddle, who cries, because he got his coat dirty, etc. So also you who have soiled your new suit of innocence, which your father Christ had made for you in baptism, because you have fallen into the filth of lust or avarice, or gluttony.

So you ought to weep and accuse yourself, according to that saying of Proverbs 6, "Because the jealousy and rage of the husband will not spare in the day of revenge, Nor will he yield to any man's prayers, nor will he accept for satisfaction ever so many gifts," (Prov 6:34-35). Note. "jealousy," like one who has a beautiful wife or daughter is jealous, and this for an excessive love, all the more one should be jealous of his soul, lest it be touched by demons or sin. "Rage" is that reprehension which a man has about himself out of contrition, saying: "O miserable one, how much have I offended God," etc.

The third day is the outward confession of sin, by which a person knows sins and is sorry for them, and so they are thrown away, as a maidservant carries away or throws the garbage out of the room of her mistress through the window. This broom with which we sweep the room of our conscience, is the remembrance of sins. David, "And I meditated in the night with my own heart: and I was exercised and I swept my spirit," (Ps. 76:7). So they are thrown out through the window of our mouth in the sewer of confession. This is what is sung today, "This is the day," namely of confession, "which the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it." Confession is called the "day" because of the brightness of the grace of God. And it is called the day of "the Lord," because Christ instituted confession. But James when he says: "Confess your sins one to another..." (James 5:16) But this is in error, because neither James or blessed Peter were able to institute some sacrament; Christ instituted seven sacraments. But James said this, as St. Thomas Aquinas says in *III, q. 64, a. 2, ad 3*, "The apostles and their successors are God's vicars in governing the Church which is built on faith and the sacraments of faith. Wherefore, just as they may not institute another Church, so neither may they hand on another faith, nor institute other sacraments. On the contrary, the Church is said to be built up with the sacraments "which flowed from the side of Christ while hanging on the Cross." And in the body of the article he says, that God alone can institute a sacrament, and he reminds us that Christ instituted it. So we say, "This is the day the Lord has made," because he instituted confession, "let us rejoice and be glad in it," and after confession man finds himself very happy, because he feels himself unburdened of the weight of sin.

The fourth day is the correction of life. Having confessed, it is necessary to correct and emend ones life through devout prayers. And it is useful to everyone morning and evening to think, that you have seen Christ in the throne of his majesty angry at you, the same for the Virgin Mary. So punish your flesh -- which occasions all sins -- through fasting, or a hair shirt, or the discipline. Also give alms, especially on Sunday when you come to mass, thinking, now I come to ask alms from God. So that I might receive the best of alms, I give alms also by correcting my life, because if before you were proud and vain, you will be humbled and so for the other sins. About this day the Apostle Paul says, "Let us walk honestly, as in the day: not in rioting and drunkenness," (Rom. 13:13).

The fifth day is the redressing of injuries, namely, that you are willing to forgive your enemies' injuries and refuse to take revenge, but by the love of Jesus, spare them, saying to God, "Lord that person inflicted an injury on me, but, Lord, I have committed greater injuries on you. So lest you take revenge on me, I choose not to take revenge, but I forgive all because of your love." About this day Christ says, "If a man walk in the day, he stumbles not, because he sees the light of this world: But if he walk in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him," (Jn 11:9-10). "He stumbles," that is falling into hell, because the light of God, namely peace and love, is

not in him. Because when he who does not wish to forgive dies, his soul, which would wish to ascend to heaven from a natural desire, then stumbles and falls into hell.

The sixth day is the repayment of debts, namely that whoever has a beautiful house, or garden (tasseam) should look around to see if there is something there that is stolen, seized illegally, by fraud, or kept illegally, which needs to be returned. Blessed is that day of restitution, About which Scripture says, "For we are come in a good day [to you]," (I Kgs 25:8).

The seventh day is restoring a person's good name. Many there are who have not had their goods stolen, nor their money, but have had more stolen, namely their good name, which is worth more. Proverbs 22:1: "A good name is better than great riches." A good reputation is necessary both for us and for others. For us, because it is a special good among exterior goods. Because it makes one fit for human offices and preserves from sin. And for others lest they be scandalized and they take to sinning from bad example, as Thomas Aquinas says in De veritate, q. 3, a. 2 [?]and II-II, q. 73, a. 2. Just as a thief is bound to restitution, so one who steals the good name of ones neighbor out of malice, even if what he says is true and it is a secret, is bound to restitution of that good name, otherwise he is not able to enter into paradise. But you ask how does one restore it? I reply, that in front of all of those before whom you have spoken ill, you are bound to make a retraction saying that they should not believe what you have maliciously reported, and if he who is defamed knows this, it is necessary also to ask forgiveness from him, otherwise it is not necessary. About this see at length Thomas Aquinas II-II, q. 73, virtually all. Many are damned because of these defamations, because a word travels, then they do not care nor confess it, nor does it enter their conscience. About this day David says symbolically [tropologic], " By your ordinance the day goes on," (Ps 118:91).

Note it "goes on" to the extent that if he does not restore the good name in this life, or because he does not have the opportunity, and dies with contrition, and the intention to ask pardon, the soul as it sometimes happens, returns from the other world to ask pardon. So note that there were two who had defamed someone, and the one defamed and one of the defamers was still living, but one defamer died and lingered for some time in purgatory. And when he came out, he believed that he would go straight to heaven. And God said, "You shall not enter, because you first have to make restitution of the good name of that person." And I know that to be true that the soul returned, because I myself was the one defamed by that person and he sought pardon from me.

The eighth day is receiving the Eucharist. After a person knows his sins, and is repentant, confesses, corrects his life, forgives injuries, repays his debts and restores a good name, and finally devoutly receives Holy Communion, then is verified the theme: "After eight days," i.e. through eight aforesaid penitential works, "Jesus comes again." About this day David said, Ps. 83:11, "For better is one day in thy courts," i.e. in the churches where Communion is received, "above thousands." Therefore, "After eight days Jesus came again," etc.