

Sermon: 6th Sunday of Easter

Text: John 16:23-33 (v.33)

Theme: Troubles. Troubles?

Goal: Jesus overcame the biggest trouble by His resurrection. He helps us to overcome our troubles.

Dear Friends,

Introduction: Christians live in this world among non-Christians and are subjected to the same kind of troubles that everyone has: health issues, age weaknesses, climate changes and natural disasters, accidents, unemployment, lack of money, and so on. In the same way as our Father in heaven “causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous”

(Matthew 5:45), He also allows us to suffer similar cases of troubles as the non-Christians.

You know that some churches are preaching that a Christian doesn't need to suffer any kind of trouble. A Christian has to be rich, healthy, has a successful career and can “order” the Father in prayer to give him what he wishes: a new car, wealth, a big house, and to heal him from any disease. If the prayer is not answered, this means that you have not enough faith... But in any case you have to pay a certain amount of money to receive this or that special blessing...

This is not biblical. Actually the opposite is true: “We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God”, says Paul (Acts 14:22). And this does not mean exactly the same hardships and troubles that are common to all the humankind, but it means special kinds of troubles that affect the Christians. Which are these?

Jesus said to His disciples: “In this world you will have trouble.”

Among several kinds of troubles (each of us knows our own

troubles), I will mention three kinds of troubles which affect specifically the Christians.

I – Specific troubles of the Christians

A - Doubts: Like Thomas, who didn't believe the testimony of his fellow disciples about the resurrected Jesus, and wanted to put his finger in Jesus' wounds and into His side to see and believe, we have many doubts as well. We cannot understand every text of the Bible. We cannot understand why something bad happens just to us. We cannot understand why there is struggle inside the church. And in certain circumstances of our life others can see questions marks on our forehead...

Prophet Daniel, a highly educated and wise man of God, who received several visions and was able to explain many dreams of King Nebuchadnezzar, at the end of his book records: “I heard, but I did not understand. So I asked, “My Lord, what will be the outcome of all this be?” He replied, “Go your way, Daniel, because the words are closed up and sealed until the time of the end... As for you, go your way till the end. You will rest, and then at the end of the days you will rise to receive your allotted inheritance” (Daniel 12:8, 9, 13).

We have the right to doubt and to question. But we cannot doubt God's grace and love in Christ. The devil tries to sow the seeds of doubts in our hearts about God's words and promises, as he did with Eve and Adam. We have to search in the Bible if possible to solve our doubts. If not, we have just to wait. As a child cannot understand how he was conceived till he becomes an adult, we sometimes need to wait for the right time to have an answer to all our doubts; if not here, then in heaven. But don't let doubts affect your faith!

B- The second specific trouble of the Christians is: temptations. Non-Christians don't suffer the same kind of temptation as a Christian. They don't have the Ten Commandments as sharp in their hearts as the Christians. What sometimes is normal behaviour for them is not normal for a Christian. Managing a business, sexual relationships, honesty (and not corruption) are some of the issues that Christians and non-Christians face from a different point of view. What is usual for some people, for a Christian is a temptation. We don't want to go against God's will.

C - The third specific trouble of the Christians is: persecution: The main trouble Jesus is mentioning in this text is persecution because of the Christian faith. Many suffer persecution because of political, race or gender issues. But a persecution that spans from Jesus' time till the 21st Century is against the followers of Christ. Many times the persecution is open in non-Christian countries: churches are burned down, Christians are thrown into jail, and pastors are prohibited to preach. But other times the persecution is hidden and dissimulated: members of the family don't agree with our faith and don't give support to it; false doctrines and practices have been infiltrated in the Christian Churches, and those who want to remain faithful to the truth are discriminated; laziness of some Christians affects the entire community...

James wrote: "Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him" (James 1:12).

II – How Jesus helps us to overcome troubles

Jesus says: "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have

overcome the world.” – Take heart! Not by ourselves, but because Jesus had overcome the world, the devil and sin by His resurrection! The disciples *were not expected to take heart on basis of favourable circumstances, but on the basis of a historical fact, namely, Jesus’ victory on Easter Sunday!* (ABC 1288). Jesus overcame the biggest of all what troubles us: death. We can only be strong enough to overcome doubts, temptations, persecution and whatever more causes us troubles as Christians when we cling to Jesus. In Him we have peace that flows from His love and from the forgiveness He offers and gives to all who believe in Him. We are not alone in our struggles. Jesus is with us. We have tools that no one has: prayer and God’s love to comfort us! Jesus assures us in this text: “My Father will give you whatever you ask in my name... Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete! ... The Father loves you because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God.” In prayer we can pour out before God what is heavy in our heart, confessing our sins to Him, our doubts, our anguishes, and believing in His love through Jesus Christ. And when we search Him in His Word and in the Sacrament, He will strengthen us and will help us according to His good will.

This doesn’t mean the end of all our problems. But when the main problem is solved: death, because we believe in Jesus and we believe in the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting, the other troubles become less important. The resurrection of Jesus and the ascension of Jesus fill us with hope and strength.

Jesus promise is for you, is for me: “I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.” Amen.