



Bishopric of Mar del Plata

**Opening Mass Homily 10th CBF (Catholic Biblical Federation) Plenary Assembly
Second Sunday of Easter: Acts 2, 42-47; Psalm 117, 2-4.13-15.22-23; 1 Peter 1, 3-9; John 20, 19-31**

Faith in Jesus gives us life

Saturday, April 15, 2023 - Mar del Plata - Argentina

Dear sisters and brothers.

Dear authorities from various fields.

Welcome to the city and the Diocese of Mar del Plata! Welcome to Argentina!

In line with the celebration of the present Eucharist, we initiate the 10th Plenary Assembly of the CBF after having postponed it several times due to the context of the pandemic. We thank God that we are gathered here together in synodal key, congregated from across the globe, to proclaim that the Word of God is a source of life for this fragile world (cf. Rm 8:22-23)! This Sunday's Gospel focuses on many of the great Easter themes. It is noteworthy that coincidentally with Easter celebration; we also celebrate the Feast of Divine Mercy instituted by Pope Saint John Paul II for the entire Church on April 30, 2000.

In the light of the Gospel, I propose three concepts to pray and meditate on; these three points can be summarized in three words: CLOSED, PEACE, FAITH.

1- CLOSED doors for fear

2- Jesus is PEACE

3- FAITH in Jesus gives us life

1- CLOSED doors for fear

At the beginning of the gospel, the image of doors that are CLOSED for fear are very suggestive. To a certain extent, this CLOSURE expresses the fragility of life and the fragility of our world. The CLOSED doors symbolize the fear that paralyzes the disciples and ENCLOSSES them, LOCKS them up, makes them turn in on themselves, be excessively self-referential as Pope Francis insists. Faced with threats from outside, false assurance is opted for in the self-absorption of CLOSED doors. CLOSING doors represents blocking communication with others. This can take place with individuals, families, groups... The temptation to hinder the bond with others to feel safe is much more frequent than we actually suppose. CLOSED doors circumstances occur many times in situations in which opening up to dialogue and meeting with others is not admitted. CLOSED doors portrays the temptation of CLOSING our hearts that we, disciples of Jesus, can undergo.

Inspired by the Word of God we are encouraged to make contact with our temptation of LOCKDOWN, with our weaknesses to change our hearts and open ourselves wide to the God of life!

2- Jesus is PEACE

In the midst of the closure of the primitive Christian community, risen Jesus appears and announces PEACE three times. The word PEACE is not a simple greeting. The Word pronounced by God is fulfilled. Jesus' PEACE greeting makes PEACE real and effective as a gift from God in the heart of the one who receives it. One of the main fruits of Easter in our life is precisely the long-awaited and necessary PEACE. We must be receptacles of this true and authentic PEACE. Today, there is a partial or superficial search for PEACE. The Gospel makes us discover that PEACE comes from the Resurrected Jesus and its most precious effect on us will be to reconcile our hearts with God. Nowadays one can find so many scenes of violence and war, we perceive circumstances of social cracks and daily irritability; nevertheless, Jesus bursts forth as a risen man and gives us the PEACE that brings together all our internal inclinations, directing them to the only one who gives true meaning to our lives, who is God himself. In a fragile world, the Word of God invites us to receive Christ who is our PEACE (cf. Eph 2,14), so that we can be true instruments and craftsmen of PEACE in history as dear Pope Francis encourages us to do.

Inspired by the Word of God we want to be men and women of PEACE transformed by the Risen Jesus to announce it with joy in this fragile world!

3- FAITH in Jesus gives us life

Verses 30-31, the end of today's text, are a kind of summary of the entire Gospel of John. The focus is in the verb to BELIEVE, which clearly invites to have faith and trust only in Jesus. Christ is defined as Messiah and Son of God. In Him and only Him, one can have true life. BELIEVE, Jesus and life are the three words that synthesize the Gospel of John and that today we must have present to redefine our life as resurrected with the Lord. Thomas' experience in the second week is something we have to internalize and be able to say "My Lord and my God!" In this way, we will be part of those disciples who BELIEVING in Jesus possess vitality to announce it with joy to all humanity. We BELIEVE in the Word of God who gives us his grace this Easter so that, with mercy, in the midst of the fragility of this world, and we proclaim to all people that He is resurrection and life.

Inspired by the Word of God we want to be men and women of faith who testify the Risen Jesus so that all people may receive life in his Name!

In conclusion

Once again, dear sisters and brothers: Welcome to the city and the Diocese of Mar del Plata! Welcome to Argentina!

Today and always, we want to proclaim the Word of God, which is source of life for our fragile world. We do it these days with the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary as we celebrate our 10th Plenary Assembly. Together we renew our baptismal faith and in a synodal key, we want to commit ourselves to our particular and universal history. That is why we say together:

We believe in Christ who is our peace and we proclaim him with mercy in the midst of the fragility of our world!

**+Msgr. Gabriel Mestre
Bishop of Mar del Plata
Argentina**