

## Sermon about John 16, 16-23a

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

Leaving is never easy, when you have stayed together for a long time with people you liked very much. When you have spent a lot of time with friends, with the family, at a feast, at a birthday party or when you took a long journey and talked to each other or shared company and realized that the time together was so worthwhile, then it is painful to leave. It is hard to say good bye and when everybody must go on his way, such farewells are like a death.

Most of us have experienced parting from people who died. We know the pain. The parting from a good friend, whom we would not see again for a very long time, the parting from a country, from a house. I have missed my home. My heart is wounded. We need some kind of security, certitude. I must know solid relationships. We are suffering when there is something broken between two people.

The bible verses for today we read in the gospel of John.

John 16, 16-23a

Jesus tells his disciples that he will leave them. We know that he announced it three times that the son of God has to suffer, but the disciples did not want to realize that. They could not imagine what Jesus wanted to say with those words. It is the same situation in chapter 16 of John.

A little while you shall not see me. And a little while later, and you shall see me again, because I am going to the father. (Verse 16).

Now Jesus is with us, is near, but there will come a time when we cannot see him, but then after a while He will return.

The disciples do not understand the meaning of these words. It is unbelievable for the disciples that one day Jesus would not be with them, that the community they shared should be ended. It makes no sense. A parting from Jesus can not be real, He is the son of God, he tells something about eternal life, he has the power to heal men, does miracles. Remember the story, when Peter, James, John and his brother were with Jesus on the mountain where they said: Lord, here is a good place, let us stay with you, it is good for us to be here. The company we shared with each other must not end. Your love, God's love is eternal.

But Jesus speaks about reality. He knows that his end is near. His passion will come. Honestly spoken, it was unbelievable for everyone who knew Jesus, how his life would end. And it was much more unbelievable what happened there on Easter morning. Afterwards, the disciples realized that Jesus fulfilled the words he had prophesized.

Without Christ's resurrection at Easter we would not understand the words of Jesus. We would be frustrated and helpless.

That is the situation described in our verses of John. The disciples could not understand the words because they could not yet imagine the wonder of Easter. Today, we are in the same situation when we must leave people we loved, when they say good bye and we do not know if we will see them again one day. It is often like a feeling of death. And death is the end, no hope, but suffering, no comfort . We can not imagine how to overcome the suffering. It is not helpful when people say there will come a time when there will be joy after the suffering. It is the situation of Good Friday. And there would be no hope for mankind were there to be no Easter.

I think we can learn from the children. Jesus taught us how to learn from the children.

Children are very disappointed and sad when parents or other people are leaving and they ask when they will return. The joy is overwhelming when they do. Children are more honest and emotional. They can not imagine that leaving is forever. They always have hope that there will be a reunion. Children do not think that death is forever, they believe that it is another state. For children it is not a problem that life will go on further and the people they miss will be with us once again.

I wish we could be like children, who are only sad for a short time, knowing it is not forever. So I think, that children have embraced the concept of Easter more than adults.

The joy of Easter is the horizon of our life. Easter is the reason why we can rejoice, although there is suffering. I hope the joy of Easter will fill our hearts in times when we suffer too and we have to say good bye to people we love. I often think of the situation that I say good bye to people but I know that we shall meet each other in heaven. And there will be happiness. In the name of Jesus.

The picture of the birth of a child wants to explain this joy and happiness to us. When you have not experienced a painful birth, it is almost only theory. Or you have fear about the situation. You think that you can not survive it because of the big pain. But when the child is born everything is forgotten, because a new human being is born. It is your child. And now you live another, new life together. The old time of pain and suffering is forgotten. This joy is a force that overcomes the pain.

May the happiness of Easter drive us through our lives and give us the power to be strong.

Amen.

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