

## **Second Sunday of Easter Sunday of Divine Mercy**

### **READ**

Acts of the Apostles 2:42 -47  
Psalm 118:2-4, 13-15, 22-24  
1 Peter 1:3-9  
John 20:19-31

### **REFLECTION**

Throughout Easter Time Jesus tells the disciples "Peace be with you." Jesus does more than calm the fears that emerge from encountering a friend who was dead just a few days ago (John 20:21). When Jesus says, "Peace be with you," Jesus tells his followers that anxiety, turmoil, and confusion cannot inhibit encountering and living the Resurrection (John 20:21). Living the Resurrection means living in hope. Living the Resurrection means knowing that sadness, sickness, and death never win, and that life and love always prevail. Living the Resurrection means building authentic community so to break down walls of prejudice, fear, and indifference.

Today's Gospel shows that the disciples continued to gather after Jesus died. Luke writes in the Acts of the Apostles that the early Christian communities devoted themselves to fellowship, prayer, and breaking of the bread. These communities were not formed because Christ died. Rather, these communities formed because Christ died and rose from the dead. Just like the early disciples, we are called to continue the work of the Resurrection in the same way.

Sometimes we fail to encounter the Risen Lord and live the Resurrection. Like Thomas, we miss opportunities to grow in faith. We do not always use our voices and lives to proclaim the Good News. Even so, we remember the peace Christ bestows on us and recognize we can continue to grow in life and love.

### **ACTION**

Thomas must have been disappointed that he was not present with the others in the upper room when Jesus first appeared, and perhaps his initial reaction is more frustration than doubt. Thomas' friends saw the Risen Lord, and he missed the opportunity. As you continue to celebrate during Easter Time, make an effort to say yes to all the good and life-giving opportunities you are offered. Do not let fear or inhibition hold you back. Rather, move forward with the peace and confidence that comes from Christ.

### **REFLECT ON THE WORD**

Today's gospel shows us a very human reality of the Resurrection. The disciples are afraid, and Thomas doubts, but they are filled with so much joy when Jesus appears to them. Thomas always seems to be criticized. We call him "doubting" Thomas...but, can we really blame him? Put yourself in his shoes for a moment. You've been following your friend and teacher for a couple of years; he has just been publicly executed, and you and your fellow disciples have gone into hiding because you are afraid of being imprisoned or killed. Now suddenly your friends are telling you the impossible: your friend and mentor has risen from the dead.

**Have you ever heard something that was too good to be true? Something that you really wanted to happen, but you were so scared of it not being true that you couldn't quite believe it?**

Of course, Thomas wanted to believe in the Resurrection! But believing in something so miraculous is hard, especially when you consider how scared the disciples were. And it's worth noting that the other disciples got to see Jesus the first time he appeared to them. There were probably others who, like Thomas, couldn't really bring themselves to believe until they actually saw the Risen Christ in person. Thomas, and any other doubters, probably felt left out or isolated because they missed out.

**Can you name a time when you felt challenged by somebody else's faith?**

**Have you ever felt like you didn't quite fit in because you couldn't believe as easily as others seem to?**

One of the big challenges in today's Gospel is when Jesus says, "Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed" (John 20:29). On the one hand, that wouldn't seem to be so hard for us. After all, we ourselves weren't there at the Resurrection; we didn't get to see Jesus walking around, and we don't get to see his wounds for ourselves. So, it might seem that our only choice is to believe without any evidence. But we do have something to "see" that can help our faith. We have over two thousand years and millions of Christians over that time who have followed the teachings of Christ. We have the lives of the saints and their tremendous act of faith. And we have the witness of our family and friends who live their lives day by day according to the way of Christ. It's true that these things are not the same as scientific proof. But that's part of the challenge of faith. We are called to believe in the Resurrection without being able to see it with our own eyes. Jesus is right: to believe without seeing *is* a blessing. But that doesn't mean it is wrong to have questions or to seek more evidence. We belong to a Church whose teaching has been evolving over two millennia, and at no point did the Church say, "we now have all the answers." The history of Christianity is one of journeying, of seeking, of asking questions. Jesus did not reject Thomas for doubting, and he will not reject us for asking questions and searching for evidence to support our faith.

**What do you question?**

**What do you seek?**

**What do you doubt?**

**What do you believe?**

## **ACT ON THE WORD**

Imagine that you are in a one-on-one conversation with Jesus, and he has agreed to answer and explain every question that you have regarding his miracles. Take a few minutes to think, and then write down two to three questions that you would ask him.

Lord Jesus Christ, we praise and glorify you on this day of salvation. May the glorious fact of your Resurrection dispel our doubts and fears, so that we may serve your people on earth until we rejoice with you in heaven, where you live and reign for ever and ever.

Amen.