

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Easter 2021

As we know nicknames can be funny and they can be cruel. They can last for a short time or throughout a person's life. They can refer to someone's physical attributes, to their temperament or to an incident that has happened to them, as in today's Gospel passage. From this incident until today the apostle Thomas, has been known as 'Doubting Thomas', though a very good case could be made for him to be called 'believing Thomas!'

Here in the west we like proof, it is how our minds work, so if we have ever doubted someone who tells us that what we believe to be impossible has actually happened, we can empathise with Thomas. For a moment look at the Gospel from his point of view. Jesus had appeared to the other disciples, locked away for fear that what had happened to Jesus would happen to them. Jesus appears out of the blue, shows them his wounds, and speaks words of peace, spoken twice, to those who had disowned and deserted him on his way to crucifixion. And then there is a missioning, a sending out, empowered by God's Holy Spirit to assure people of God's merciful forgiveness.

Thomas was missing, we don't know why, and when the others told him what had happened he refused to believe. Jesus' death had been a huge disappointment, hopes had been dashed, and Thomas wasn't about to go through all that again, so he laid down conditions if he was to believe. Eight days later Jesus appears again and calling Thomas over to him fulfils the conditions Thomas had laid down. So called 'Doubting Thomas' now makes the greatest act of faith in the whole of the Gospels, calling Jesus "My Lord and my God." To which Jesus replies, 'Thomas you believe because you can see me. Happy are those who have not seen and yet believe.' And that blessing includes us.

In John's Gospel the day of Resurrection is also the day of Pentecost, and the disciples are changed. Empowered by the Holy Spirit they shared with people their own experience of Jesus risen from the dead. Many came to believe because of their witness and the first reading gives us an insight into how the first followers of Jesus, empowered by the Holy Spirit, chose to live. They recognised from the outset their need of each other, and their desire to make sure that everyone had all they needed. If this meant pooling their resources, then so be it. It sounds very counter cultural to our own society with its emphasis on looking after oneself. But there are communities today living in this way, looking out for others. For example the people in Fr Luis' parish running a co-op to make sure, as the first readings states, that 'none of their members was ever in want.' And we might compare this sharing with our own possession and use of vaccines, while our friends in Nicaragua, and other developing countries, are still waiting for any vaccines to arrive. Can we learn from Fr Luis's parishioners who have relatively little compared to ourselves, to share more of our plenty? Can we rid ourselves of the fear of not having sufficient if we become a little more generous?

We are among the blessed who have had no experience of the physical presence of Jesus, but believe in him. It is a great chain of faith which has passed through centuries under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, from the time of the Apostles to ourselves. On this 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Easter, which brings the Easter Octave to a close, may we experience the joy of believing in Jesus risen from the dead and an ever growing desire to share our faith, our lives and resources with others near and far.

## Bidding Prayers for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Easter

Celebrant:

Let us pray to God the Father, who raised Jesus to life and exalted him at his own right hand.

Reader:

For the Church – that it will always proclaim the resurrection of Jesus from the dead with courage and conviction.

Lord in your mercy

For those who are suffering the horrors of violence and war – that the words of peace spoken by Jesus in today's Gospel will become a reality in their lives.

Lord in your mercy

For all migrants, but especially unaccompanied children – that they will be treated with dignity and respect and given the opportunity to rebuild their lives and face the future with hope.

Lord in your mercy

For ourselves on this Divine Mercy Sunday – that we will grow in our gratitude and appreciation of God's merciful compassion and forgiveness.

Lord in your mercy

For those who have died, especially all victims of violence, accident, natural disaster and the COVID pandemic, and Anne Flashka, John Powell, Thomas Godfrey and Rose Caulfield whose anniversaries occur this week – that they and all who have died may rest in peace and rise in glory. Lord in your mercy

Either aloud or in silence we pray for our own special intentions...pause...then

Lord in your mercy

We ask the prayers of Mary as we say Hail Mary...

Celebrant:

God of eternal compassion, each Easter you rekindle the faith of your people. Give them still greater grace that all may truly share the life of the risen Lord. Help us to reach out to all in need, and especially to those affected by dementia. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen