

Homily for the 2nd Sunday of Easter 2022

We have a phrase 'seeing is believing' which fits in with our western minds that like certainty and proof. We don't like to be fooled and we don't easily believe something we think impossible. Further when we have been let down badly, we don't want to put ourselves into a situation where this could happen again. This brings us to Thomas, or as he has been known for centuries, 'Doubting Thomas', the disciple who missed out on Jesus' appearance to the other disciples in the upper room.

Although we know the story well as it is the gospel of the 2nd Sunday of Easter every year, it is worth looking at it closely. Jesus' death had come as a huge blow to the disciples not only in terms of losing him but also in the fact that they feared that they would be hunted down and killed. So they locked themselves away for fear of the Jews. Into their fear Jesus appears, speaking words not of recrimination or condemnation, but words of peace, not once but twice. Peace is the antidote to fear, easy to say but not so easy to achieve. What must the people of Ukraine feel when they hear this passage today with missiles blowing up their cities and millions of people fleeing for their lives? Jesus then showed them his wounds in his hands and side, reminding us that his giving of peace did not come without a huge cost to himself.

But this was not all, Jesus now sends them on a mission, not by themselves, but with the gift of the Holy Spirit. In John's Gospel Easter Sunday, the day of Jesus' resurrection, is also Pentecost, the day they received the Holy Spirit, literally breathed into them by Jesus with the mission to forgive sins. If peace is the antidote to fear, forgiveness brings about peace and reconciliation.

As we know Thomas was not present, and, as we also know he refused to believe the others when they told him what they had experienced. He even laid down conditions before he would accept what they had told him. Again as we know, Jesus appeared 8 days later and fulfilled Thomas' conditions, bringing from him the greatest act of faith in the Gospel tradition - My Lord and my God. It is now that Jesus says, 'Thomas you believe because you can see me, happy are those who have not seen and yet believe.' We might think of this as the 9th beatitude.

We see something of the disciples fulfilling the mission given to them by Jesus. In today's passage from the Acts of the Apostles the emphasis is on healing, so much a part of Jesus' own ministry, and also of the Church's ministry right to the present day, a ministry in which we take part whenever we offer encouragement, forgiveness, hope or practical charity to others. St John in the 2nd reading writes, 'through our union in Jesus I am your brother and share your sufferings, your kingdom and all you endure.' We might ask how we are sharing the sufferings of so many people in our world, Ukraine included, and all they are enduring today? How might we make peace a reality, not only in our own lives, but also for others? As the Father sent me so am I sending you, words spoken to us today. Can we reply, Here I am, Lord, I come to do your will?

Bidding Prayers for the 2nd Sunday of Easter 2022

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 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 all those who are sick in body, mind or spirit – that they may experience the healing of the Risen Jesus, and the support and prayers of family and friends.

Lord in your mercy

For those who have died, especially all victims of violence, accident, natural disaster and the Covid 19 Pandemic, for Wayne Hemmings whose funeral service takes place this coming Friday at Oldham Crematorium, and Frank Hooson, Leslie Osbaldeston, Gerard Higgins, Lavar Heaton, Ethel Davies, Alice Ardern, Michael Murphy, Ian Johnson and Thomas McGreal 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. Through Christ our Lord. Amen