

**ECHOING GOD'S WORD
IN
THE CATHOLIC COMMUNITY**

**Second Sunday of Easter
April 24, 2022**

SCRIPTURES:

| | |
|-------------------------|---|
| Acts 5:12-32 | Faith in Jesus heals many in Jerusalem. |
| Revelation 1:9-13,17-19 | Christ, the Living One, loves us. |
| John 20:19-31 | Jesus promises greater blessings to us. |

READ THE SCRIPTURES:

John:

In John's Gospel, the appearances of Jesus to the disciples after the resurrection are designed to show a fulfillment of the promises he made during his Farewell Discourse (John 14-17). He would return (14:18). He would bring peace (14:27-29). He would bring joy (16:20,22). John wants to make sure that those who hear this Gospel will know that the One who appears is really the One who was crucified and died. Hence, the emphasis on the physical wounds. It is important that we acknowledge and believe the same Jesus who lived an earthly life, just as we do, now lives in the glory of the Father, sharing in the fullness of divine power and majesty. Such is the source of our own hope for life everlasting.

Luke presents the giving of the Holy Spirit after a span of 50 days from the time of the resurrection. John would have us know that the Spirit has not delayed in coming. The same day as the Risen Lord first comes to his disciples, he "breathes on them" a new breath of the Spirit of God. The creation of God is being renewed, "re-created" by the action of the Spirit. God breathed on the waters of creation in the Book of Genesis and life emerged from the waters (Genesis 2:7). Jesus breathes on the disciples and the new life of rebirth comes into them. They are filled with the Spirit of God. The Church becomes the mediator of divine forgiveness. The commission given to the Church has to be received along with the divine Spirit which will give effect to the ministries of reconciliation and healing. The Spirit will enable the community to fulfill its mission.

By the time John wrote his Gospel, some had begun to doubt that the promises of the Lord would be fulfilled. They needed to hear that they were not the first to harbor such thoughts. Thomas personifies and embodies all the puzzlement and the doubts of the Christian community. His response becomes the model for the response appropriate to all of us; to fall down in prayer of praise and worship. "Lord Jesus, you are my Lord and my God!" It is not wrong to doubt, as long as it ends in faith and worship.

When Jesus comes near to Thomas and invites him to explore his wounds, the signs of his crucifixion, all doubts vanish. The nearness of Jesus is what it takes to resolve doubts. Wandering even farther away from the Lord has the opposite effect: less and less faith. Getting into the pain and suffering of Jesus has the power to reverse my doubting and to bring me to a

stance of believing and worshipping. When we bring our pain to be joined with that of Jesus in the Holy Sacrifice, we will know with a divine insight that he is our Lord and our God.

Originally, the Gospel of John probably ended here. Chapter 21 is obviously a later addition. Those who hear this Gospel should ponder the true meaning of Jesus' life and ministry. If we believe in his death and resurrection, we will have new life. Our hope for eternal life rests on the faith we have in Jesus Christ, Lord and Savior.

Acts:

The beginning of the Book of Acts lays out for the community several summaries of the teaching and ways of acting proper to the early Church (Acts 2:42-47; Acts 4:32-35). In this summary (Acts 5:12-16), the apostles are able to work signs and wonders just as Jesus did in his own ministry. Crowds came to Jesus when he displayed the signs of the kingdom. Crowds begin to come to the apostles, too. Luke wants us to see that there is an amazing parallel between the life and ministry of Jesus and the life and ministry of his disciples. The good news will spread to the far corners of the earth when these pilgrims gathered in Jerusalem will return to their homes in the far reaches of the Roman Empire.

Revelation:

Today, the Church begins an orderly reading of the Book of Revelation which will last until, but not including, Pentecost. This is the book that reveals the final triumph of good over evil, of life over death. It is most appropriate for the season of Easter. The message begins with the Seven Letters to Seven Churches. "Seven" being the perfect and complete number in apocalyptic literature, we are to infer that the revelation of God is complete (seven letters) and addressed to all of God's people (seven churches). The imagery is elaborate: "one like the son of man" relates to the angel seen in Daniel 10:5-6; the garb of the high priest in Exodus 28:4; the Ancient of Days again in Daniel 7:9; the cherubim and the glory of God in Ezekiel 1:5-6, 24 and 43:2. The "two-edged sword" is the word of God in Hebrews 4:12. The Risen One is he who determines how this fullness of revelation will be transmitted: "Write!"

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Have you noticed that Jesus did not promise the gift of peace: he *gives* that gift! Do you see the Church as the recipient of that gift? Do you see yourself having been given peace by Christ? In what ways? Describe the many gifts of peace given to the Church and the many gifts of peace given to you. Have you ever felt Christ *breathing in your face*? (He does not breathe *down our necks*! He breathes upon us face to face, imparting the Holy Spirit which brings peace).
2. Describe how you have come to appreciate the "doubting" of Thomas and what you have learned about believing from your own experience of doubting. Tell your family about some of the doubts you have had about God, about Jesus, about the Church, the sacraments, eternal life, life after death, the forgiveness of sins, etc. Share with others how those doubts have been turned into faith by Jesus coming close to you and showing you his wounds in your own suffering or in illness or in sorrow.

3. What are some of the powerful signs that the Church uses today to communicate the fullness of divine revelation? Music, art, TV, the Internet, movies, newspapers, books and magazines? If you were making a TV program about the triumph of God over all the evils and sufferings of the world, how would you proceed? Are there some better ways to spread the good news? What should this diocese do differently? What should your parish do?

PRAYER

**Almighty God,
may the Easter sacraments we have celebrated
live forever in our minds and hearts.**

Prayer after Communion: 2nd Sunday of Easter

CATHOLIC DOCTRINE:

From its earliest days, the Church has practiced a “laying on of hands” for the healing of the sick. “In my name...they will lay their hands on the sick and they will recover” (Mark 16:17-18). “So, they went out and preached that (men and women) would repent. And they cast out many demons and anointed with oil many that were sick and healed them” (Mark 6:12-13). The care of the sick is one of the most important ministries that Christ has entrusted to the Church.

There is a fullness to the ministry of the care of the sick that goes beyond the sacramental anointing. Of course, our ministry of the Anointing of the Sick exercised by priests and bishops in the name of the whole Church brings to bear all of the Church’s divine and human resources toward the forgiveness of sins and the healing of mind, body, and spirit. But, that is not all.

Christ has sent the whole Church, in all its members, to care for those who suffer any kind of pain at all. We all do that in family life, in our compassionate care for those who are sick in our neighborhoods and among our friends. The Church sponsors professionally managed health-care facilities of all kinds. The Sisters of Charity of Saint Teresa of Calcutta, the Sisters of Mercy in Maine, the Sisters of the Good Shepherd, the Grey Nuns, the Felician Sisters, and many private individuals, lay and religious, are devoted to alleviating the pain and the suffering of those who are sick.

We find the ultimate meaning and value for our suffering and dying in the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Uniting ourselves with Christ, we offer a spiritual sacrifice to God the Father in the person of Jesus Christ the Son.

We have a choice in the face of suffering and pain. We can be self-absorbed, resistant to God’s invitation that we surrender entirely into his care; we may even despair and revolt against God. But we also have the choice of faith, to acknowledge our limitations, our finiteness, our need for renewal of life which can come only from Christ and the Holy Spirit.

Christ is the Divine Physician. He brings healing to body and soul. Jesus often asks those he cures to repent and to believe. He sees a connection between illness and the sin of the Evil One, which has contaminated God’s creation. He heals by redeeming us from alienation. His victory over sin and death was achieved in his Passover when he crossed into the new life of resurrection.

(See **The Catechism: #1499-1513**)

© 2017 Rev. Clement D. Thibodeau. All rights reserved.