

First reading Acts 5:12-16

More than ever believers were added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women.

Many signs and wonders were regularly done among the people by the hands of the Apostles. And they were all together in the Solomon's Portico. None of the rest dared join them, but the people held them in high esteem. And more than ever believers were added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women, so that they even carried out the sick into the streets and laid them on cots and mats, that as Peter came by at least his shadow might fall on some of them. The people also gathered from the towns round Jerusalem, bringing the sick and those afflicted with unclean spirits, and they were all healed.

Responsorial Psalm 118(117):2-4,22-27a. R1

Give praise to the Lord for he is good, his mercy endures for ever.

Let the house of Israel say,
'His mercy endures for ever.'

Let the house of Aaron say,
'His mercy endures for ever.'

Let those who fear the Lord say,
'His mercy endures for ever.'

The stone that the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone.

By the Lord has this been done,
a marvel in our eyes.

This is the day the Lord has made;
let us rejoice in it and be glad.

We beseech you, O Lord, grant salvation;
we beseech you, O Lord, grant success.

Blest is he who comes
in the name of the Lord.

We bless you from the house of the Lord;
the Lord is God, and has given us light.

Second reading Revelation 1:9-13,17-19

'I died, and behold I am alive for evermore.'

I, John, your brother and partner in the tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance that are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet saying, 'Write what you see in a book and send it to the seven churches.'

Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me, and on turning I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the lampstands one like a son of man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash round his chest. When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he laid his right hand on me, saying, 'Fear not, I am the first and the last, and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades. Write therefore the things that you have seen, those that are and those that are to take place after this.'

Sequence

Victimae Paschali Laudes

Christians, to the Paschal Victim

offer sacrifice and praise.

The sheep are ransomed by the Lamb;

and Christ, the undefiled,

hath sinners to his Father reconciled.

Death with life contended:

combat strangely ended!

Life's own Champion, slain,

yet lives to reign.

Tell us, Mary:

say what thou didst see

upon the way.

The tomb the Living did enclose;

I saw Christ's glory as he rose!

The angels there attesting;

shroud with grave-clothes resting.

Christ, my hope, has risen:

he goes before you into Galilee.

That Christ is truly risen

from the dead we know.

Victorious king, thy mercy show!

Gospel Acclamation John 20:19-31

Alleluia, alleluia.

You believed, Thomas, because you have seen me, says the Lord. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed. **Alleluia.**

Gospel John 20:19-31

Eight days later, Jesus came.

On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, 'Peace be with you.' When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.' And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld.'

Now Thomas, one of the Twelve, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, 'We have seen the Lord'. But he said to them, 'Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe.'

Eight days later, his disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.' Then he said to Thomas, 'Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe.' Thomas answered him, 'My Lord and my God!' Jesus said to him, 'Have you believed because you have seen

me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.'

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

Copyright: The readings are from the Jerusalem Bible published by Darton, Longman & Todd, Ltd 2019

Feast Days this Week

Monday 28th April: St George

Tuesday 29th April: St Catherine of Siena

Wednesday 30th April: St Pius V

Thursday 1st May: St Joseph the Worker

Friday 2nd May: St Athanasius

Saturday 3rd May: Sts Philip and James

Reflection on the Readings

The Gift of Peace

Cardinal Joseph Bernardin was archbishop of Chicago. He was told in August 1996 that a cancer which had been in remission had returned and that he had only a short time to live. He died the following November. During those two months he wrote a book covering the previous three years of his life, entitled, 'The Gift of Peace'. One of the most difficult experiences of those last three years of his life was a much publicised accusation of misconduct which was made against him by a young man called Stephen. He subsequently withdrew the accusation and acknowledged that it was false. In his book Cardinal Bernardin describes the reconciliation which he initiated with his accuser. Stephen was dying of AIDS at the time, and at their meeting he offered the cardinal an apology which was gently accepted. Cardinal Bernardin offered Stephen a gift, a Bible in which he had inscribed words of loving forgiveness. Then he showed him a one hundred year old chalice, a gift to the cardinal from a man who asked him to celebrate Mass sometime for Stephen. That Cardinal Bernardin celebrated Mass there and then. He described his meeting with Stephen as the most profound and unforgettable experience of reconciliation in his whole priestly life.

In today's gospel we find the first disciples dispirited and terrified after the death of Jesus. They have to confront their failure to be faithful to Jesus in the hour of his passion and death. They are in a huddle, having locked themselves away in a room. Suddenly Jesus stands among them and says to them, 'Peace be with you' and breathes the Holy Spirit upon them. The risen Lord was reconciling his failed disciples to himself; they came to recognise themselves as forgiven, and, so their hearts were filled with joy. Having experienced the gift of the Lord's forgiveness, they are sent out in the power of the Spirit to offer to others the gift of forgiveness they have received. 'Those whose sins you forgive, they are forgiven'. That gift and mission is given to all of us who have been baptised into the risen Jesus. Having been reconciled to the Lord we are all sent out as ministers of reconciliation. The sacrament of reconciliation is, of course, a privileged moment of reconciliation, when we receive anew the Lord's forgiveness and extend that forgiveness to those who have hurt us. However, there are other, more frequent, moments of reconciliation: the daily forgiveness of our brothers and sisters; the speaking of the hard words, 'I am sorry' and the gracious acceptance of another's offer of apology. In these moments, Jesus is standing in our midst, helping us to break out of situations that can be draining of life for everyone involved.

Thomas had not been in the room when the risen Lord appeared to the other disciples. He had missed out on the Lord's bestowal of the gifts of peace and forgiveness. Thomas seems to have cut himself off from the community of the disciples. He had gone off on his own to nurse his wounds, and so he missed out on the Lord's presence in the midst of the fearful and failed disciples. He is not unlike so many today who, for a variety of reasons, have cut themselves off from the church. When we cut ourselves off from the community of believers, we lose out greatly. For all its flaws and failings, the church is the place where we encounter the risen Lord. The Lord continues to stand among the community of disciples, especially when we gather in worship and pray, when we gather to serve others in the Lord's name. It is there that we hear the Lord say, 'Peace be with you', that we experience his forgiveness for our past failures, that we hear the call to go out in his name as his witnesses, that we receive the Holy Spirit to empower us to be faithful to that mission. The community of disciples reached out to Thomas; they shared their newfound faith with him, their Easter faith, 'We have seen the Lord'. Those first disciples remind us of our calling to keep reaching out in faith to all those who, for whatever reason, have drifted away from the community of believers and no longer gather with us. If we do so, we may encounter the same negative response that the first disciples experienced from Thomas, 'I refuse to believe'.

*Yet, even though our efforts may fail, as the efforts of the disciples failed, we know that the Lord will keep reaching out to us when we cut ourselves off from the community of faith, just as the Lord reached out to Thomas. 'Doubt no longer', he said to him, 'but believe'. Then, out of the mouth of the sceptic came one of the greatest acts of faith in all of the gospels, 'My Lord and my God'. Thomas Merton wrote in his book *Asian Journal*, 'Faith is not the suppression of doubt. It is the overcoming of doubt, and you overcome doubt by going through it. The man of faith who has never experienced doubt is not a person of faith'. There was a great honesty about Thomas; he didn't pretend to believe when he didn't. The gospel suggests that such honesty is never very far from authentic faith. [MH] associationofcatholicpriests.ie*

The Cycle of Prayer

Human Work

Especially on St Joseph the Worker — 1 May

Background

The commemoration of St Joseph the Worker on 1 May was instituted by Pius XII in 1955. It proposes the example and intercession of Joseph as worker and provider.

Prayer

*God our Father, creator and ruler of the universe,
in every age you call men and women
to develop and use their gifts for the good of others.
With St Joseph as our example and guide,
help us to do the work you have asked
and come to the rewards you have promised.*

Roman Missal (adapted)