

First reading Acts 2:42-47

'All who believed were together and had all things in common.'

The believers devoted themselves to the Apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the Apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the Temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they shared their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

Responsorial Psalm 118(117):2-4, 13-15, 22-24. 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.'

They pushed me, pushed me hard to knock me down,
but the Lord was my helper.

The Lord is my strength and my song;
he was my saviour.

There are shouts of joy and salvation
in the tents of the righteous.

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.

Second reading 1 Peter 1:3-9

'He has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.'

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!

According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith — more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire — may be found to result in praise and glory and honour at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcomes of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

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 20:29**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.

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Feast days this week

Monday 13th April: St Martin I

Cycle of Prayer

New Members of the Church

Background

The Easter Season is therefore the time for post-baptismal catechesis or 'mystagogy' with the newly baptised or 'neophytes'.

Helped by a doubting apostle

The expression "Doubting Thomas" comes from this remarkable Easter story. The apostle Thomas, one of Jesus's inner circle, was slow to believe in the resurrection. He demanded concrete evidence before he could believe that the risen Jesus had appeared to his fellow apostles. His story offers some comfort to those of us who are always nagged by doubts. With the memory of our Lord's crucifixion fresh in their hearts, the nervous disciples had locked the doors of their meeting room.

They had locked themselves for fear of Jewish reprisals. They were afraid that what was done to Jesus could be done to them. The turning point came when Jesus appeared among them and breathed the Holy Spirit into them, filling them with new purpose. "As the Father sent me, so am I sending you." In the power of the Spirit they left their self-imposed prison, to go out and spread the message of Jesus. In today's reading from Acts St Luke shows them witnessing to the resurrection both in word and by the quality of their living.

Some people who cannot believe profess to envy those who do. They would like to experience the certainty of believers and share the faith of their parents. And indeed, most ordinary mortals have moments of doubt during our spiritual journey. Thomas's recovery from his doubts offers a valuable insight into God's mercy and kindness.

Are we sometimes like those disciples, indecisive, inactive, unwilling to promote the faith. The "slings and arrows of outrageous fortune" have dented our confidence. Are we tempted to abandon our faith journey, unable to see a way forward? Our past failures make us hesitant to try again. Today's gospel offers a solution. The Lord himself has power to revive our courage and our faith. No locked doors, nor even locked hearts, can keep him out.

At first, Thomas refused to believe that the others had seen him. He demanded definite and demonstrable, tangible proof. Jesus gave him the proof he needed. "Put your finger here," he said, "and feel my wounds." He forgives our fears and doubts too, and offers us a fresh start. We need to say in our turn, "My Lord and my God."

Today we meet with the risen Christ, just as St Thomas did. Sharing in the Eucharist is our statement of loyalty, our act of personal and shared faith. In praying the Eucharist together we help each other's faith and strengthen our Christian community. It was because the members of the early Church in Jerusalem met in public for prayer and seemed such a joyful little community, that so many others came to believe and the church grew steadily in those early, Spirit-filled days.

No-one else can do our believing for us. Eventually Thomas came to believe in the resurrection, when he saw the risen Jesus with his own eyes. The story ends with a message for all who have received the gift of faith: 'Happy are those who have not seen and yet believe.' Our faith is a gift from God. But it is not an inert gift that can we lock away like some precious heirloom. It is a living gift that needs nurturing, to grow and mature. Like other life-forms, faith can wither from neglect. We need to pray about it, think about it, and express it in actions arising from love. This does not mean that we will never have any doubts. But if like Thomas we continue seeking, we too will come into the presence of Jesus and say "My Lord and my God!"

"This is a time for the community and the neophytes together to grow in deepening their grasp of the paschal mystery and in making it part of their lives through meditation on the Gospel, sharing in the eucharist, and in doing works of charity." RCIA 234

Prayer

*Father, you give your Church
constant growth by adding new members
to your family.*

*Help us put into action in our lives
the baptism we have received in faith*

Roman Missal