

Father John's Gospel Reflection



Gospel

GOSPEL – SUNDAY, 23 APRIL, 2017 – SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER (John 20:19-31)

After eight days Jesus came in and stood among them.

In the evening of that same day, the first day of the week, the doors were closed in the room where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews. Jesus came and stood among them. He said to them, 'Peace be with you,' and showed them his hands and his side. The disciples were filled with joy when they saw the Lord, and he said to them again, 'Peace be with you.'

'As the Father sent me, so am I sending you.'

After sending this he breathed on them and said:

'Receive the Holy Spirit. For those whose sins you forgive, they are forgiven; for those whose sins you retain, they are retained.'

Thomas, called the Twin, who was one of the Twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. When the disciples said, 'We have seen the Lord,' he answered, 'Unless I see the holes that the nails made in his hands and can put my finger into the holes they made, and unless I can put my hand into his side, I refuse to believe.' Eight days later the disciples were in the house again and Thomas was with them. The doors were closed, but Jesus came in and stood among them. 'Peace be with you,' he said. Then he spoke to Thomas, 'Put your finger here; look, here are my hands. Give me your hand; put it into my side. Doubt no longer but believe.' Thomas replied, 'My Lord and my God!' Jesus said to him:

'You believe because you can see me. Happy are those who have not seen and yet believe.'

There were many other signs that Jesus worked and the disciples saw, but they are not recorded in this book. These are recorded so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing this you may have the life through his name.

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Reflection

GOSPEL REFLECTION – SUNDAY, 23 APRIL, 2017 – SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER

(John 20:19-31)

Every year on the Sunday after Easter we hear this story of the doubting Thomas. But surprisingly the word for doubt associated with Thomas is absent in John's Gospel. Sure, it appears in Matthew's account of the post resurrection story, but not here. Our story here is not about Thomas, rather it is about the various responses to the reality of the resurrection.

Previous to this passage (v.1-18) we are told of the responses of Mary Magdalene, Peter, and the beloved Disciple. As this text opens, the disciples display an initial response of fear, they are left alone, having put so much into being disciples of Jesus. He understands this and so Jesus comes to them offering them peace - quelling their hearts of the anxiety they would have experienced over the past few days.

The significance of this story for the first readers of John's Gospel should not be overlooked. They have had to move from the certainties of their home, Jerusalem after the destruction of the Temple - some say to Ephesus. Now they live in fear and trepidation, their temptation is to "lock the doors" of their lives, or they could choose a more positive role, empowered now by the Holy Spirit.

Ultimately, the appropriate response to the reality of Easter involves being transformed by the Word, the Word which in John's Gospel is Jesus incarnate, Jesus crucified, and Jesus, one with the Father who offers us life and life to the full.

Also, an important theme here is Jesus' post crucifixion appearance – on the one hand he can walk through walls, suggesting that his body does not have the substance it had before the crucifixion, on the other hand Jesus invites Thomas to touch his wounds, implying Jesus had a real material body.

Fr John Boyd-Boland ofm

- In a very complex and complicated world, many live with the reality of uncertainty that breeds fear. Jesus invites us to open the doors of our hearts, to reach out to others, and embrace our world and its challenges.
- Just as the disciples gathered *together*, we can achieve so much more, and our faith is fortified when we act in community.
- Each one of us is a recipient of the Holy Spirit, acknowledging that, let us move forward with confidence and trust, using the gifts of the Spirit for the betterment of our society.

Take home Message