

19 APRIL 2020 Sunday Message

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

Like newborn infants, you must long for the pure, spiritual milk, that in him you may grow to salvation, alleluia.

GLORIA

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to people of good will.

We praise you, we bless you, we adore you, we glorify you, we give you thanks for your great glory, Lord God, heavenly King, O God, almighty Father.

Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son, Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father, you take away the sins of the world,

have mercy on us; you take away the sins of the world, receive our prayer; you are seated at the right hand of the Father, have mercy on us.

For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord, you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

COLLECT

God of everlasting mercy, who in the very recurrence of the paschal feast kindle the faith of the people you have made your own, increase, we pray, the grace you have bestowed, that all may grasp and rightly understand in what font they have been washed, by whose Spirit they have been reborn, by whose Blood they have been redeemed. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

FIRST READING

Acts 2:42-47

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles.

The whole community remained faithful to the teaching of the apostles, to the brotherhood, to the breaking of bread and to the prayers.

The many miracles and signs worked through the apostles made a deep impression on everyone.

The faithful all lived together and owned everything in common; they sold their goods and possessions and shared out the proceeds among themselves according to what each one needed.

They went as a body to the Temple every day but met in their houses for the breaking of bread; they shared their food gladly and generously; they praised God and were looked up to by everyone. Day by day the Lord added to their community those destined to be saved.

The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

PSALM

Psalm 117

Response:

Give thanks to the Lord for he is good, for his love has no end.

or

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

1. Let the sons of Israel say: "His love has no end." Let the sons of Aaron say "His love has no end." Let those who fear the Lord say: "His love has no end." (R.)

2. I was thrust, thrust down and falling but the Lord was my helper. The Lord is my strength and my song; he was my saviour. There are shouts of joy and victory in the tents of the just. (R.)

3. The stone which the builders rejected has become the corner stone. This is the work of the Lord, a marvel in our eyes. This day was made by the Lord; we rejoice and are glad. (R.)

SECOND READING

1 Peter 1:3-9

A reading from the first letter of St Peter.

Blessed be God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who in his great mercy has given us a new birth as his sons, by raising Jesus Christ from the dead, so that we have a sure hope and the promise of an inheritance that can never be spoilt or soiled and never fade away, because it is being kept for you in the heavens. Through your faith, God's power will guard you until the salvation which had been prepared is revealed at the end of time. This is a cause of great joy for you, even though you may for a short time have to bear being plagued by all sorts of trials; so that, when Jesus Christ is revealed, your faith will have been tested and proved like gold – only it is more precious than gold, which is corruptible even though it bears testing by fire – and then you will have praise and glory and honour. You did not see him, yet you love him; and still without seeing him, you are already filled with joy so glorious that it cannot be described, because you believe; and you are sure of the end to which your faith looks forward, that is, the salvation of your souls.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia!

Jesus said: "You believe because you can see me.

Happy are those who have not seen and yet believe."

Alleluia!

GOSPEL

John 20:19-31

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John.

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 saying 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 life through his name.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

PROFESSION OF FAITH

I believe in God, the Father almighty, Creator of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,

(all bow during the next two lines)

who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried; he descended into hell; on the third day he rose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty; from there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Amen.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Accept, O Lord, we pray, the oblations of your people (and of those you have brought to new birth), that, renewed by confession of your name and by Baptism, they may attain unending happiness. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

Bring your hand and feel the place of the nails, and do not be unbelieving but believing, alleluia.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Grant, we pray, almighty God, that our reception of this paschal Sacrament may have a continuing effect in our minds and hearts. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

THE WORD

DISCIPLES BECOME APOSTLES

(JOHN 20:19-31)

Fresco of the twelve apostles by Enrico Reffo (1914), in Chiesa di San Dalmazzo, Turin, Italy.

In the first scene of our Gospel reading today, the risen Jesus reveals himself to his fearful disciples: he breathes the Holy Spirit onto them and sends them to continue his mission.

Up to this point in the Fourth Gospel, the disciples have had no share in Jesus' ministry, and their faith in him has been incomplete. They have heard from Mary Magdalene that the Lord is risen, but now they have experienced him for themselves. Their reaction of being filled with joy tells us that they have accepted the truth of the resurrection and so their journey from conditional to unconditional faith is accomplished. They are to witness to Jesus now that he is no longer with them physically.

This Gospel passage is not so much concerned with the historical disciples themselves as with those who will come to believe through their word. Hence the figure of Thomas represents those who will be told by others about Jesus, but will find it hard to believe: they will only accept the message after questioning and searching without having a visual experience of Jesus. So the words Jesus speaks underline this, when he pronounces the one beatitude we find in the Fourth Gospel: "Happy are those who have not seen and yet believe." ■

REFLECT

Many parents find it hard when their children give up the practice of the faith. Despite their best efforts, there comes a point when the younger ones decide that what they have been taught either does not make sense to them or that it does not matter. Even very young children can decide that organised religion is not for them. There are many reasons why people give up the outward expression of the faith into which they were baptised, probably as an infant: in the past, there were certain social pressures to go to church which do not exist any more.

Sometimes we hear talk about whether the activity of the Church (or parish) is best described as "mission or maintenance". The model which Jesus gives in the Gospel today is mission: his disciples are not to stay in the place where they are and celebrate their belief in him simply among themselves, but they are to go out and spread his message. Those who accept freely their witness will signify this outwardly by being baptised and thus having their sins forgiven and living the Easter life of the risen Lord. No one can make this decision for anyone else. No catechetical

SAY

Happy are those who have not seen and yet believe!

(John 20:29)

DO

As you leave the church, and your home, imagine a sign above the door which says, "Welcome to your mission field!"

LEARN

The forgiving or retaining of sins mentioned in today's Gospel refers to the person accepting or declining baptism.

Thomas' scepticism has a positive result: it leads him to an encounter with the risen Lord.

To believe in Jesus is ultimately a personal decision.

programme can guarantee success: all we can do is to present what we believe and entrust the result to the Holy Spirit.

There is obviously a hunger among people for a deeper meaning in life. Very often, the interest of someone who enquires about the faith is sparked off by meeting someone who is committed and who gives the impression of having found such a meaning. We do not have to leave home to be missionary disciples: the mission field is all around us. ■