

Sunday Message

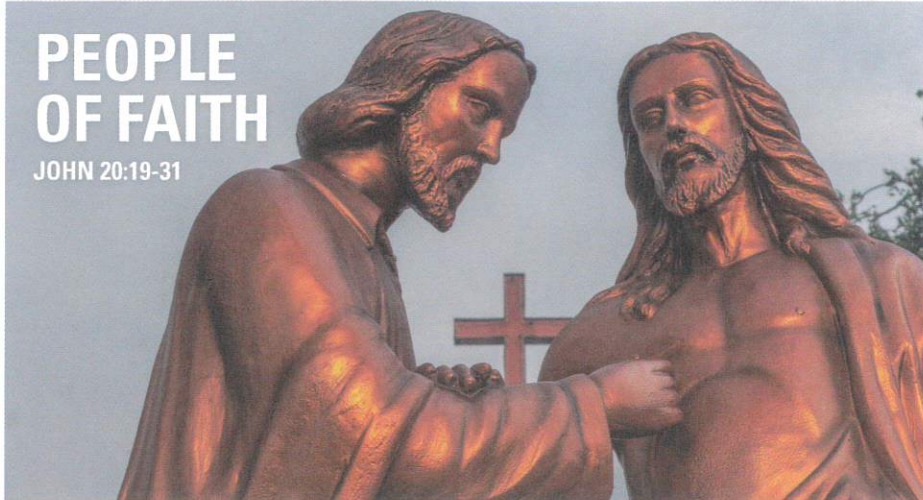
SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER

THE WORD

Year A • 16 April 2023 • Psalter Week 2

PEOPLE OF FAITH

JOHN 20:19-31



Today's Gospel tells the beautiful story of how Thomas the Doubter became Thomas the Believer.

It's the evening of the first Sunday after Jesus' crucifixion, and his disciples have gathered together behind locked doors. They're afraid that those who crucified Jesus will come looking for them, too, so they bolt the door. Suddenly, Jesus appears before them. They are flabbergasted and bewildered, but Jesus shows them his wounds, and they know it is the Lord.

One of the disciples, Thomas, was absent that evening, so when they tell him the extraordinary news that Jesus is alive, he doesn't believe them. He knows that Jesus had been put to death during Holy Week, so how could he be alive?

A week later, the disciples are in the locked room again, and this time Thomas is with them. Once more, Jesus appears. He knows what Thomas has said about him, so he offers him an invitation. "Put your finger here; see my hands. Put your hand into my side. Doubt no more but believe."

Thomas doesn't need to touch Jesus. Seeing Jesus with his own eyes is enough. He falls on his knees and gives the most wonderful profession of faith in all of history: "My Lord and my God!"

In reply, Jesus offers words of comfort and praise for all future believers: "You believe because you can see me; happy are those who have not seen and yet believe." ■

REFLECT

Jesus of Nazareth never ran for office or a position of power, but he had a vision for how people should live and what the world should be like. Remember when he stood up in the synagogue in Nazareth at the beginning of his ministry. He gave what amounted to a mission statement: "I have come to bring good news to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives, give sight to the blind, and announce the year of God's favour." He spoke of a God of mercy and love; even more importantly, Jesus practised what he preached.

He said that the kingdom of God is one of justice, peace, and love and that his followers will be judged based on how just and compassionate they are.

We see that vision put into practice in today's first reading from the Acts of the Apostles. It is early in the life of the Church, and St Luke paints a pen picture of the new Christian community. They are united as one family. They pray together; they share what they have in common; they look after the weaker members. They support each other. They are one.

Of course, divisions begin to emerge before long, as St Paul's letters demonstrate, but today's first reading offers a glimpse of how things were, how things might be, and how they should be. A glimpse of the kingdom of God in action.

PRAY

Pray especially for people who hide behind closed doors of doubt and uncertainty. Ask the Lord to increase their faith.

DO

In today's Gospel, Jesus gives his followers a task, a commission. He tells them that just as the Father sent him, he is now sending them out to be his witnesses before the whole world. We are his witnesses in our time and place. Speak to someone this week about your faith.

SAY

"My Lord and my God."

LEARN

The gift of faith is meant to be shared. It is not a private thing. Just as the disciples left their locked room to proclaim the Gospel, so are we called to proclaim the Gospel every day, not just by the words we speak but by the example of our lives.



In today's Gospel, the risen Jesus gives his followers a task, a commission. He tells them that just as the Father sent him, he is now sending them out to be his witnesses before the world. They are to live as he lived and do as he did, putting his vision into practice. It's about building the kind of Easter community St Luke describes, about putting into concrete practice the peace Jesus promises in today's Gospel.

If we lived like that, there would be no doubting Thomases, nobody would need to question belief in God or the point of religion because everyone would see the beauty of faith in Christ Jesus and the extraordinary, life-changing difference it makes. ■

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, 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!

- 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.)
- 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.)
- 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 are 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.