

Homily. 2nd Sunday of Easter. Year.B. 7/8 April 2018.

The 1st and 2nd readings change, but no matter what year it is the gospel from St. John for this Sunday is always the same. It tells us of two appearances of the Risen Jesus to His secluded and scared disciples, cowering away from the public in a room somewhere in Jerusalem.

We're told that the first appearance of Jesus happened on the evening of Easter Resurrection Sunday. John makes it clear that the disciples were fearful and shut in tight, though locked doors proved no issue for Jesus. He came among them showing them the wounds of His crucifixion, offering them peace and joy, repeating these gift in the hope that they may leave their fears behind. He gave them the breath of His life, that so empowered they might go out bringing His forgiveness to all the world.

Herein lie 2 issues; They could only do this if they're able to surrender themselves to the power and working of His Holy Spirit, moving outwards in service to others, shifting their focus away from their fears about their own safety and survival, and secondly; They weren't all present, as Thomas was MIA that evening. Of course, when he got back, they told him all about what had happened, but Thomas wasn't having bar of what he hasn't seen and experienced for himself, good skeptic that he was.

A full week passed before Jesus comes to them again. Sadly, it seems that they hadn't gone very far at all as they were still holed up in the same room though as St. John says, this time Thomas was with them.

Jesus spoke more words of peace and reassurance, then turned His gaze on Thomas. Seeing was enough for him, not needing to go for the full

touching of the Lord's wounded hands and side. Convinced, Thomas made the great confession of faith saying, My Lord and my God. John ends by reminding us that we are counted amongst the happy and blessed because we haven't seen and yet we believe in Jesus the Christ, Risen as our Lord and God.

This well known much loved story makes clear that it took a long while to get those disciples out of that room of fear, freely moving back into the world as apostles, building the kind of community of faith described to us in the reading from the Acts of the Apostles. Likewise, it takes a lot to move us from fears about well-being to a faith and service that is both apostolic and active, dying as Jesus did to our selfishness for the good of others. It takes a lot to get us going out of ourselves so that we can do the right and really loving thing, hanging our consequences with Christ on His Cross.

The only power capable of doing this is our faith in Jesus Risen, a faith born from His Holy Spirit living in us today. Like the disciples, like Thomas too, we have to see and hear the Risen Lord for ourselves, and this we can and do, though we've grown to take it too much for granted. You see, He's appeared to us right now, here in our own faith community, speaking to us through His word, the Sacraments and each other. He's active in the respect and service we offer others, prompted to do so by His Holy Spirit.

He's called us to form the Church, becoming His living body, celebrating and nourishing our New Life in Him, sending us out then to bring His peace and merciful forgiveness to the world of our work and families, friends and social connections, and to strangers we bump into daily.

How do we see and hear the Lord and know that He lives? No need to look any further than those around you here tonight/today, and those who do the work of the Spirit out there in our big wide world. It's in these people, places and deeds that we find Him coming to meet and greet us with His peace, calling us even now to follow in His footsteps, from slavery and death into true freedom and the bright light of His Risen life.