

Homily. 2nd Sunday of Easter. 27/28 April 2019.

After His resurrection from the dead Jesus repeatedly appeared to His disciples. Sometimes it was to one of them on the first Easter morning, or to a couple of them travelling on the road to Emmaus; at other times to many of them in Galilee, or as we have it this weekend, His appearance to the disciples holed-up fearfully in a room somewhere in Jerusalem.

Remembering that Judas had deserted the group, there were 11 of them left that Easter night, but as St. John says only 10 were present. It's always struck me that Thomas must have been the most courageous or maybe the least afraid of the lot of them because he'd risked leaving the room of fear, going out in public on some important errand or task. Naturally enough, when he returned to learn that the other 10 had seen and heard the Lord he wanted to see, hear and even touch for himself.

It doesn't take much imagination to grasp why Thomas wanted this. Just think, if someone you'd known well and loved had died and been buried for a few days only to be told by other friends and family that they'd appeared to them in your absence, wouldn't you be full of doubts and questions? Wouldn't you, the more they insisted that this was true, want proof and the experience for yourself? As it turned out, Thomas had to wait a full week for his proof, which for us is this 2nd Sunday of Easter. When proof came, when Jesus came to all of them, the sight and sound of the Lord was enough. Without needing any touch-test Thomas confessed that Jesus was both his Lord and his God, the clearest declaration of faith the gospels to the divinity of the Risen Christ.

Yet another thing for us to notice is that in all of Jesus post-resurrection appearances He always began by offering the gift of His peace. Just as He'd promised this peace-gift is one which the world cannot give, a deep, divine and enduring peace. It's linked to the forgiveness He'd won for us all and that in His breath, in His Risen Spirit, we are commissioned to pass on to others. We need do little more than open our eyes and ears, as did disciples when He appeared to them, to know that the peace the Lord gives isn't about a trouble and worry free life. After all, it's been won for us by His unselfishness and sacrifice for the good of the many, His suffering and His absolute trusting faith in God's will and power, a costly gift indeed.

The peace offered to you and me, the peace we pray for, remember and share after the Lord's Prayer, comes to us from our faith with a sure knowledge that we're always loved by and acceptable to God, no matter what. It comforts us because it comes from the Comforter, the Holy Spirit of the Risen Lord alive in us, assuring us that even when things get awful we have a future and a hope that can never be corrupted or lost. It's the breath of this peace-gift that liberates us to do courageous things, acting and speaking out the truth demanded by our faith. It's the peace of the Lord's resurrection which frees us opt to forgive the unforgivable, just as we've been forgiven and loved ourselves, despite our many betrayals, denials and desertions, so like those first disciples.

Finally, we have the story of John, exiled on the island of Patmos for fearlessly preaching God's word and witnessing to the Lord Jesus. In his

vision John saw the Lord in all power, a sight which overcame him. Touching and reviving him, Jesus said; Do not be afraid; it is I. These words mean the same as thing as Peace be with you. Then Jesus continued, saying; I am the First and the Last; I am the Living One. I was dead and now I live for ever and ever, and I hold the keys of death and the underworld. Listen to these words now with the ears of your resurrection faith knowing that you have no more evil to fear for the Lord is reigning in your heart, and in the midst of all who are God's people.