

SPIRITUALITY

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

John 20:29

R¹. Alleluia, alleluia.

You believe in me, Thomas, because you have seen me, says the Lord; blessed are those who have not seen me, but still believe!

R². Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel John 20:19-31; L43A

On the evening of that first day of the week, when the doors were locked, where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, "Peace be with you."

When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side.

The disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord.

Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you.

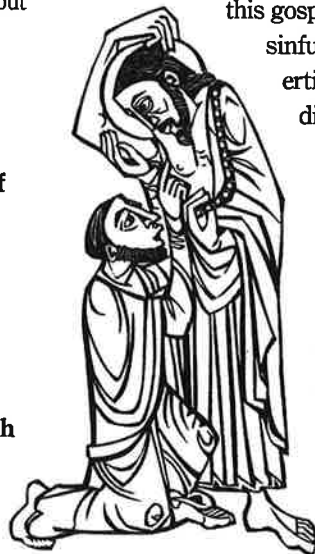
As the Father has sent me, so I send you."

And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit.

Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained."

Thomas, called Didymus, one of the Twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples said to him, "We have seen the Lord."

But he said to them, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands and put my finger into the nailmarks and put my hand into his side, I will not believe."



Reflecting on the Gospel

"The disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord." The absent Thomas could not bring himself to such rejoicing in Jesus' being alive, for he had not yet encountered the risen Jesus; he had not yet come to believe. Thomas insists on seeing and touching Jesus before he can believe that he is truly alive and well. A week later, confronted by the risen Jesus, Thomas's obstinate doubt becomes unwavering belief: "My Lord and my God!" Both the disciples and Thomas's shifts in who and how they were had everlasting effects on them. In fact, from this gospel we can tease out myriad shifts: mourning to joy, fear to peace, sinfulness to forgiveness, being behind locked doors to being sent out, inertia to empowerment by the Holy Spirit, not seeing to seeing, obstinate disbelief to acclamation of faith, life before Jesus' resurrection to new "life in his name." For those who believe, Jesus' resurrection shifts their self-understanding and their purpose in life, enabling them to see all things as new. Do we believe?

The risen Jesus is relentless in bringing us to the same belief he coaxed out of Thomas. Today we see and touch the risen Jesus in many ways. We see and touch the risen Jesus in our encounters with his risen Presence through the "many wonders and signs" (first reading) the Spirit works within and through us who have come to believe. The resurrection asks more of us than merely believing in Jesus' new Life. Our belief is strengthened by our doing. The doing brings about shifts in our own self-understanding: we are members of Christ's Body living with his risen Life coursing within us. The doing brings about shifts in our own purpose in life: we now, through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, continue Jesus' saving ministry.

The struggle to believe is no less than the struggle to recognize and encounter the risen Jesus. This is really what our Christian life is all about—encountering the risen Jesus who lives now within us, and believing that risen Life is given to us to share with others. Our Easter joy doesn't come from tangibly seeing and touching the risen Jesus; it comes from grappling with the mystery of the resurrection because what the mystery promises is so much: new Life.

Living the Paschal Mystery

Not just Thomas, but all the disciples came to believe because they had "seen the Lord." Yet we are not disadvantaged because we have not seen or touched him as did the disciples long ago; the advantage of encountering Jesus comes not from seeing and touching but from *believing*. Because of believing we can say we "have seen the Lord."

Another twist to this seeing/believing issue is hinted at in the first reading. These early Christians enjoyed "favor with all the people." While other New Testament texts tell us that all wasn't peaches and cream, this passage does point to the extraordinarily good life the early Christians led, with no one in their midst in need. One way that we might say that we have truly "seen the Lord," then, is in the good works performed by those who claim his name. Jesus' risen Presence was different from his physical presence before the resurrection (the gospel makes a point about Jesus coming through a locked door). Therefore, even though we are removed from the historical reality of Jesus' Presence, we are no less able to "see" and be present to the risen One. The challenge for Christian living, of course, is that we see the risen Jesus in the goodness of others.

Continued in Appendix A, p. 290.

Focusing the Gospel

Key words and phrases: Jesus came and stood in their midst, I send you, Receive the Holy Spirit, I will not believe, but believe, My Lord and my God, life in his name

To the point: From this gospel we can tease out myriad shifts: mourning to joy, fear to peace, sinfulness to forgiveness, being behind locked doors to being sent out, inertia to empowerment by the Holy Spirit, not seeing to seeing, obstinate disbelief to acclamation of faith, life before Jesus' resurrection to new "life in his name." For those who believe, Jesus' resurrection shifts their self-understanding and their purpose in life, enabling them to see all things as new. Do we believe?

Connecting the Gospel

to the second reading: Peter is describing what happens to those who believe in the risen Jesus: new birth, living hope, imperishable inheritance, glorious joy, salvation.

to experience: Sometimes believing comes easy, for example, when the truthfulness of what someone is saying is consistent with who we know the person to be. Sometimes believing is challenging, for example, when what we are being told is beyond the scope of our own experience. The resurrection is both easy and challenging to believe.

Connecting the Responsorial Psalm

to the readings: In the responsorial psalm we proclaim that redemption has been wrought by God and "it is wonderful in our eyes." We do see the redemption. The question is where and how. The disciples (Thomas-come-lately included) were shown Jesus' risen body (gospel). The crowds in the days of the early church saw "wonders and signs . . . done through the apostles" (first reading). We see redemption in the manner in which we break bread, care for the needy, pray together, and forgive one another (first reading and gospel). All these wondrous works reveal the presence and power of Jesus' resurrection. The readings call us to see and believe. The psalm calls us to give thanks to God from whom this redemption comes (psalm).

ASSEMBLY & FAITH-SHARING GROUPS

- For the resurrection to be a lived experience in my daily life, the shifts I must undergo are . . .
- I know I miss seeing and touching the risen Jesus in others because . . .
- I received the Holy Spirit at baptism, and . . .

PRESIDERS

In my ministry, I am like the disciples staying behind locked doors when . . . When I realize that Jesus is sending me, I . . .

DEACONS

I see and touch the wounds of the risen Jesus in the people I serve when I . . .

HOSPITALITY MINISTERS

My manner of greeting those gathering for liturgy invites them to shift from . . . to . . .

MUSIC MINISTERS

When I live belief in the risen Jesus, the purpose of my ministry becomes . . .

ALTAR MINISTERS

My serving others is a sign to the community that Christ is "My Lord and my God" when . . .

LECTORS

My believing in Jesus' resurrection can be heard in my proclamation when . . .

EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS OF HOLY COMMUNION

The manner of my distributing Holy Com-

Second Sunday of Easter (or of Divine Mercy), April 23, 2017

Gospel (cont.)

John 20:19-31; L43A

Now a week later his disciples were again inside and Thomas was with them.
 Jesus came, although the doors were locked, and stood in their midst and said, "Peace be with you."
 Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and see my hands, and bring your hand and put it into my side, and do not be unbelieving, but believe."
 Thomas answered and said to him, "My Lord and my God!"
 Jesus said to him, "Have you come to believe because you have seen me?"
 Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed."

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples that are not written in this book.
 But these are written that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that through this belief you may have life in his name.