

## 2nd Sunday of Easter, Year C

### GOSPEL

Jerusalem Bible © 1966 by Darton, Longman & Todd Ltd and Doubleday & Company Inc.

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.

(John 20:19-31)

### DID YOU KNOW?

Points of interest and Catholic lore

- The period from Easter to Pentecost is known as 'the Great Fifty Days' and is an integral part of the Lent-Easter-Pentecost cycle.
- There is an ancient tradition that Thomas preached the Gospel as far east as India.
- The next few weeks feature readings from John's Gospel, the last of the written canonical gospels. While the Synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke) are read through the normal three-year cycle, John is featured in particular seasons throughout the normal cycle.

### EXPLORING THE WORD

This gospel is one of transformation. The fear of the disciples, locked in their upper room and huddled in upon themselves, is transformed by the gift of peace that Jesus brings and his giving of the Spirit to strengthen them on their way. The doubt of Thomas is transformed by his encounter with the risen Lord. With this transformation, however, comes responsibility. Just as Jesus was sent by the Father, now, too, the disciples are sent into the world to act as Jesus did.

- You could discuss the concluding rite of the liturgy and how we are sent out into the world to continue Christ's mission. What does this mean in reality?

When Thomas is told by his companions that they have seen Jesus, he places his own conditions on faith. He will not believe unless he sees and touches Jesus. Jesus must fulfill the expectations that Thomas has!

- Are there times when we expect God to act as we wish rather than being open to the presence of the risen Christ in unexpected ways?
- What does the peace of Christ mean to believers today?
- In what ways does the world need the peace of Christ today?

### MAKING CONNECTIONS

Opportunities for group discussion and personal prayer

- 'The disciples were filled with joy when they saw the Lord.' What have been your feelings since the events of last week?
- 'Happy are those who have not seen and yet believe.' This is addressed to you! How will you nourish that belief in the future?
- Share experiences of doubt you have had in your life: times when you doubted the love of another or doubted your own abilities. What drove doubt away?
- Look for ways in which a simple gesture of touch can convey friendship, compassion or support this week.
- Repeat Thomas' acclamation of faith this week:  
*'My Lord and my God.'*

### SHARING THE TRADITION

A closer look at the Scripture of the day, to see how it makes more explicit God's word to us through the teachings of Jesus Christ

'Those whose sins you forgive, they are forgiven. Those whose sins you retain, they are retained.' Jesus' disciples are to continue the work of reconciling all people to God. His power to forgive sins is conferred on the Church. Through baptism, God's forgiveness becomes available to us, but human beings do not lose their tendency to sin simply because they are baptised. The sacrament of reconciliation is there to assist the faithful to acknowledge human sinfulness and seek the forgiveness and reconciliation of God.

- Review the rites of reconciliation. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* offers ample material for the exploration of this sacrament.
- Be sure that the newly baptised are familiar with what they need to do and say when they receive the sacrament of reconciliation.
- Discuss the value of privately reflecting on our human failings and weaknesses. Through being more aware of our sinfulness, we open ourselves to God's mercy and love.

### SYMBOLS AND IMAGES

It is when Thomas is given the opportunity to touch Jesus that he professes his faith. Touch goes beyond verifying physical presence. It can provide healing and comfort; it can be an act of support or compassion.

### LIVING THE WORD

Practical ideas for group leaders to employ in connecting Scripture and daily life, with suggestions for music and environment

- How and when is the sacrament of reconciliation celebrated in your community? Perhaps the newly baptised may need to become familiar with the form of reconciliation. One possibility may be to arrange a special celebration for the newly baptised, their sponsors and other key members of the community on the first occasion that they receive this sacrament. Celebrate this moment together!
- Use the Easter symbol of the paschal candle and the symbols of initiation—oil and water—as a focus for prayer. Pray for each other and pray for the peace of Christ. You could use adaptations of the prayers used in initiation. Conclude with an Easter song.

### NOTES

Dotted lines for taking notes, occupying the right-hand side of the page.