

2nd Sunday of Easter, Year A

GOSPEL

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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 St Thomas preached the Gospel as far east as India.
- In Aramaic, the language spoken by Jesus, the name of Thomas means 'twin'.

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.

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?

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?
- How do you understand 'life in his name'?
- What does 'the peace of Christ' evoke for you now?
- 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? How was doubt driven out for you by the events of the Easter Vigil? Share your reflections.
- Look for ways in which a simple gesture of touch can convey friendship, compassion or support this week.
- Repeat St Thomas' acclamation of faith this week:
My Lord and my God.

