

2nd Sunday of Easter, Year B

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 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 is transformed by the gift of peace, and the doubt of Thomas is transformed by his encounter with the risen Jesus. With this transformation, however, comes responsibility. The disciples are not to simply bask in the joy of Christ risen but are sent to continue the mission of Jesus in the world: 'As the Father sent me, so I am sending you.'

- You could discuss the concluding rite of the liturgy and how we are sent out to continue Christ's mission in our own world.

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. Jesus must fulfil the expectation that Thomas has. The following week, he is forced to confront this and is brought to realise the pointlessness of imposing conditions on God. Only then can he see that God's ways are often surprising. Only after accepting this truth does Thomas come to understand what faith really is.

- Are there times when we expect God to behave as we want rather than being open to the presence of the risen Christ in unexpected ways?

MAKING CONNECTIONS

Opportunities for group discussion and personal prayer

- What have been some of the doubts and uncertainties you experienced on your faith journey? Have these been fully resolved?
- Do you see yourself as now being 'sent'? What does this mean for you?
- How do you experience the peace of Christ?
- Have you ever been 'locked in' because of fear or being trapped in a certain way of thinking or responding? What was it that liberated you? Share your experiences.
- Have you ever had 'blind faith' in something or someone? What does this mean?
- Look for ways in which a simple touch can convey friendship, compassion or healing this week.
- Repeat Thomas' great acclamation of faith often this week:

My Lord and my God.

