

GOSPEL

JOHN 20:19-31

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.

The Gospel of the Lord.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Describe your experience of the risen Jesus in your life? What are the signs that tell you he is alive and active in your life and the lives of others bringing new life?
2. Jesus' presence sends the disciples out to proclaim the resurrection and continue his work in the power

of the Holy Spirit. Describe how you have felt the Holy Spirit calling you into sharing faith and enabling people to experience new life?

A REFLECTION BY POPE FRANCIS

On this Sunday which brings the Octave of Easter to a close I renew to everyone my good wishes for Easter in the very words of the Risen Jesus: "Peace be with you" (Jn 20:19, 21, 26). This is not a greeting nor even a simple good wish: it is a gift, indeed, the precious gift that Christ offered his disciples after he had passed through death and hell.

He gives peace, as he had promised: "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you" (Jn 14:27). This peace is the fruit of the victory of God's love over evil, it is the fruit of forgiveness. And it really is like this: true peace, that profound peace, comes from experiencing God's mercy. Today is Divine Mercy Sunday, as John Paul II — who closed his eyes to the world on the eve of this very day — wanted it to be.

John's Gospel tells us that Jesus appeared twice to the Apostles enclosed in the Upper Room: the first time on the evening of the Resurrection itself and on that occasion Thomas, who said unless I see and touch I will not believe, was absent. The second time, eight days later, Thomas was there as well. And Jesus said, speaking directly to him, I invite you to look at my wounds, to touch them; then Thomas exclaimed: "My Lord and my God!". So Jesus said: "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe"; and who were those who believed without seeing? Other disciples, other men and women of Jerusalem, who, on the testimony of the Apostles and the women, believed, even though they had not met the Risen Jesus. This is a very important word about faith, we can call it the beatitude of faith. Blessed are those who have not seen but have believed: this is the beatitude of faith! In every epoch and in every place blessed are those who, on the strength of the word of God proclaimed in the Church and witnessed by Christians, believe that Jesus Christ is the love of God

incarnate, Mercy incarnate. And this applies for each one of us!

As well as his peace Jesus gave the Apostles the Holy Spirit so that they could spread the forgiveness of sins in the world, that forgiveness which only God can give and which came at the price of the Blood of the Son. The Church is sent by the Risen Christ to pass on to men and women the forgiveness of sins and thereby make the Kingdom of love grow, to sow peace in hearts so that they may also be strengthened in relationships, in every society, in institutions.

And the Spirit of the Risen Christ drove out fear from the Apostles' hearts and impelled them to leave the Upper Rome in order to spread the Gospel. Let us too have greater courage in witnessing to our faith in the Risen Christ! We must not be afraid of being Christian and living as Christians! We must have this courage to go and proclaim the Risen Christ, for he is our peace, he made peace with his love, with his forgiveness, with his Blood and with his mercy.

REFLECTION QUESTION

- What has struck you from this reflection by the Holy Father?

PRAYER

Spend some time in prayer with one another

1. Conscious of what has just been shared, members briefly name/ describe their prayer needs.
2. Intentionally call on the Holy Spirit to be present (e.g. "Come Holy Spirit, please be present as we pray")
3. Move to prayers of thanks and praise to God
4. Prayer for each others' prayer needs. Where appropriate, you may like to encourage the group to place a hand on the shoulder of the individual that you are currently praying for.
5. Conclude your prayer time with another prayer of praise, perhaps reciting the 'Glory Be' or similar prayer.