

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.

A REFLECTION BY POPE FRANCIS

Today is the eighth day after Easter, and the Gospel according to John documents for us the two appearances of the Risen Jesus to the Apostles gathered in the Upper Room, where on the evening of Easter Thomas was absent, and eight days later, he was present. The first time, the Lord showed them the wounds to his body, breathed on them and said: "As the Father has sent me, even so I send you". He imparts his same mission, through the power of the Holy Spirit.

But that night Thomas, who did not want to believe what the others witnessed, was not there. "Unless I see in his hands the print of the nails, and place my finger in the mark of the nails, and place my hand in his side", he said, "I will not believe". Eight days later — which is precisely today — Jesus returned to stand among them and turned immediately to Thomas, inviting him to touch the wounds in his hands and his side. He faced his incredulity so that, through the signs of the passion, he was able to reach the fullness of faith in the Paschal Mystery, namely faith in the Resurrection of Jesus.

Thomas was one who was not satisfied and seeks, intending to confirm himself, to have his own personal experience. After initial resistance and apprehension, in the end even he was able to believe, even though through effort, he came to believe. Jesus waited for him patiently and offered himself to the difficulties and uncertainty of the last to arrive. The Lord proclaimed "blessed", those who believe without seeing the first of which is Mary his Mother. He also met the needs of the doubting disciple: "Put your finger here, and see my hands...". In the redeeming contact with the wounds of the Risen One, Thomas showed his own wounds, his own injuries, his own lacerations, his own humiliation; in the print of the nails he found the decisive proof that he was loved, that he was expected, that he was understood. He found himself before the Messiah filled with kindness, mercy, tenderness. This was the Lord he was searching for, he, in the hidden depths of his being, for he had always known He was like this. And how many of us are searching deep in our heart to meet Jesus, just as He is: kind, merciful, tender! For we know, deep down, that He is like this. Having rediscovered personal contact with Christ who is amiable and mercifully patient, Thomas understood the profound significance of his Resurrection and, intimately transformed, he declared his full and total faith in Him exclaiming: "My Lord and my God!". Beautiful, Thomas' expression is beautiful!

He was able to "touch" the Paschal Mystery which fully demonstrated God's redeeming love (cf. Eph 2:4). All of us too are like Thomas: on this second Sunday of Easter we are called to contemplate, in the wounds of the Risen One, Divine Mercy, which overcomes all human limitations and shines on the darkness of evil and of sin.

Jesus Christ is the face of the Father's Mercy. Let us keep our gaze turned to Him, who always seeks us, waits for us, forgives

us; so merciful, He is not afraid of our wretchedness. In his wounds He heals us and forgives all of our sins. May the Virgin Mother help us to be merciful with others as Jesus is with us.

Reflection Questions

- Thomas desired a personal, tangible experience of the presence of the risen Jesus in order for him to believe? Do you long to experience Jesus' presence or have you had a deep experience of Jesus' presence in your own life? Share with the group?
- Jesus' presence filled the disciples with peace, joy and a filling with the Holy Spirit? In what ways has this been true in your life?
- This experience of the risen Jesus sent the disciples out on mission, proclaiming the amazing reality of his resurrection. What feelings and action does the resurrection arouse in you?

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. Pray 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.