

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.

A REFLECTION BY POPE FRANCIS

Today's Gospel passage recounts that on the day of Easter, Jesus appears to his disciples in the Upper Room, in the evening, bearing three gifts: peace, joy, the apostolic mission.

The first words he says are: "Peace be with you". The Risen One brings authentic peace, because through his sacrifice on the Cross he achieved reconciliation between God and humanity, and he conquered sin and death. This is peace. His disciples needed this peace first and foremost,

because, after the Master was arrested and condemned to death, they fell into dismay and fear. Jesus appears among them alive and, in showing the wounds — Jesus wanted to preserve his wounds — in his glorious body, gives peace as the fruit of his victory. But that evening the Apostle Thomas was not present. Apprised of this extraordinary event, incredulous at the testimony of the other Apostles, he demands to personally verify the truth of what they assert. Eight days later, just as today, the apparition is repeated: Jesus confronts Thomas' incredulity, inviting him to touch His wounds. They are the sources of peace, because they are the sign of the immense love of Jesus who defeated the forces hostile to man: sin, death. He invites him to touch the wounds. It is a lesson for us, as if Jesus were to tell all of us: "If you are not at peace, touch my wounds".

Touch Jesus' wounds, which are the many problems, difficulties, persecutions, illnesses of so many suffering people. Are you not at peace? Go. Go to visit someone who is the symbol of Jesus' wounds. Touch Jesus' wounds. Mercy flows from those wounds. That is why today is the Sunday of Mercy. A saint used to say that Jesus' crucified body is like a bundle of mercy, which reaches each of us through his wounds. All of us need mercy, as we know. Let us draw near to Jesus and touch his wounds in our suffering brothers and sisters. Jesus' wounds are a treasure: mercy issues from them. Let us be courageous and touch Jesus' wounds. With these wounds he stands before the Father; he reveals them to the Father, as if to say: "Father, this is the price; these wounds are what I paid for my brothers and sisters". With his wounds Jesus intercedes before the Father. He gives us mercy if we draw near, and he intercedes for us. Do not forget Jesus' wounds.

The second gift that the Risen Jesus brings to his disciples is joy. The evangelist recounts that "the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord". And there is also a verse, in Luke's version, that says that they disbelieved for joy. We too, perhaps when something incredible, beautiful has happened, might say: "I cannot believe it; this is not true!". This is how the disciples were. They disbelieved for joy. This is the joy that Jesus brings us. If you are sad, if you are not at peace, look to Jesus Crucified; look to the Risen Jesus; look at his wounds and receive that joy.

And then, in addition to peace and joy, Jesus also brings the gift of mission to the disciples. He says to them: "As the Father

has sent me, even so I send you". Jesus' Resurrection is the beginning of a new dynamism of love, capable of transforming the world with the presence of the Holy Spirit.

This second Sunday of Easter, we are invited to approach Christ with faith, opening our heart to peace, joy and the mission. But let us not forget Jesus' wounds because from them come peace, joy and the strength for the mission. Let us entrust this prayer to the maternal intercession of the Virgin Mary, Queen of Heaven and Earth.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- 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?
- 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?

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.