

Second Sunday of Easter, A, 4/19/2020

(As we continue to be confined to our homes because of the coronavirus remember we still have the Word of God to help us through these difficult days. Let us continue to be people of hope as we once again reflect on the scriptures for this 2nd Sunday of Easter. For this homily I wish to limit my focus to the Gospel.)

Today we have three different scenes presented to us In the readings: from the Acts of the Apostles we see the working of the Spirit in the early days of the church. In the First Letter of St. Peter we see a picture of the early Christian community some many years later and in the Gospel of St. John we are back in the upper room for Easter.

On the actual day of Easter Jesus gives gifts to those gathered in the upper room. It is late in the afternoon. His first gift to them is “shalom” or peace. Why this gift of peace? It is Jesus’s way to forgive them for abandoning him on Good Friday. His second gift is a commission: they are to bring Jesus love and merciful forgiveness to the whole world. He calls them to be like Jesus Himself: *“As the Father sent Me so I send you.”*

(Today I want to to focus on the scene from the week later when Jesus dialogues with Thomas.) Unfortunately this encounter gives Thomas a nickname I don’t think he deserves: *“Doubting Thomas.”* Why do I say this? Because I think all the disciples were doubters as all of them were hidden in fear behind locked doors when Jesus appeared to them? So why pick on Thomas!

To begin with I think we should be grateful to the author of John’s Gospel for this intimate scene between Jesus and Thomas. I think he tells us of this scene because he knew there would always be doubts about the Resurrection of Jesus. It helps all of us when we reflect on this intimate scene. A week earlier Thomas had

demanded proof: *“Unless I see the marks of the nails in His hands and put my finger into the nail marks and put my finger into His side, I will not believe.”* Jesus now meets Thomas and invites him to *“put his fingers here and see my hands and bring your hand and put into my side, and do not be unbelieving but believe.”* Thomas answers these words by saying: **“My Lord and my God!”** **What an act of faith!** Thomas proclaims that Jesus is not only the messiah but God. (*Thomas is actually the first one in all the scriptures to proclaim the divinity of Jesus.*) So we see today that for Thomas doubt leads to faith.

The ending of this Gospel today is important for each of us. As John tells us: *“Blessed are those who have not seen and yet come to believe.”* We were not privileged to be in the upper room that day and we are not going to see the Risen Christ and yet we are believers, even if at times we are doubters, too. So let me conclude by asking each of us, myself included: **Am I a believer in the Risen Christ? And what does it mean to be a believer?** (If you will, please spend a little time on this question.)

Let me end with probably the best-known words of John’s Gospel (John 3:15 and following).

“God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son so that everyone who believes in Him may not die but may have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to be its judge but to be its savior.”

Happy Easter, once again.

