

### READINGS

Acts 2 : 2a, 22-32

1 Peter 1 : 3-9

John 20 : 19-31

### INTRODUCTIONS

*These may be included in the Parish Magazine, in the weekly service sheet, or by the lector as an introduction to the readings.*

#### **Acts 2 : 2a, 22-32**

On the Day of Pentecost, a crowd gathered to listen to the Apostles speak of the risen Christ. Peter shows how a Psalm of David can now be seen as proof that everything that had happened was within God's plan of salvation.

#### **1 Peter 1 : 3-9**

We begin today a series of readings from a letter ascribed to Peter. It was written to Gentile Christians, and begins with a hymn of praise. Even those who have not themselves seen the risen Jesus still know the joy, love and trust that faith brings.

#### **John 20 : 19-31**

On the first Easter evening, Jesus appears to his disciples with his habitual greeting of peace, and a gift of the Holy Spirit. Thomas must wait another week until he can see, believe, and adore.

### PRAYERS

God of mercy,  
you wash away our sins in water,  
you give us a new birth in the Spirit,  
and redeem us in the blood of Christ.  
As we celebrate Christ's resurrection,  
increase our awareness of these blessings,  
and renew your gift of life within us.  
We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,  
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,  
one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Catholic Collect for the 2nd Sunday of Easter

### PRAYERS OF THE CHURCH

Through resurrection from the dead, God has given us new birth. Let us offer prayers to God for the living hope of all the world.

*Deacon or other leader*

For peace from on high and for our salvation.

#### **Glory and praise to you, O living God.**

For the peace of the whole world, for the welfare of the holy churches of God, and for the unity of all.

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**Glory and praise to you, O living God.**

For this holy gathering and for those who enter with faith, reverence, and fear of God.

**Glory and praise to you, O living God.**

For our new brothers and sisters illumined by the light of Christ.

**Glory and praise to you, O living God.**

For *N* our bishop and the presbyters, the deacons and all who minister in Christ, and for all the holy people of God.

**Glory and praise to you, O living God.**

For the world and its leaders, our nation and its people.

**Glory and praise to you, O living God.**

For all those in need, the suffering and the oppressed, travelers and prisoners, the dying and the dead.

**Glory and praise to you, O living God.**

For ourselves, our families, and those we love.

**Glory and praise to you, O living God.**

Remembering our most glorious and Blessed Virgin Mary and all the saints, let us offer ourselves and one another to the living God through Christ. **To you, O Lord.**

*Presider*

Blessed are you, O Lord our God, who gives us eternal peace through Jesus Christ. Hear our prayers which we offer in the hope of glory, and breathe upon us with your Holy Spirit; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

### SERMON STARTERS

### NOTES ON READINGS AND PSALM

#### **Acts 2:14a, 22-32:**

- This text gives Peter's speech to the crowds on the Day of Pentecost.
- "the definite plan and foreknowledge of God." I like Peter's word, here, "foreknowledge." To me, it says that God can know what's going on, and still not make our choices for us. I'm not sure that's what Peter meant. But that's how I think of things, sometimes. I believe that God has a purpose for me, but I can't believe God won't let me make choices, otherwise my life has very little meaning.
- Peter is interested in showing Jesus as in the line of David, carrying on the Davidic throne. Perhaps he felt this would be a good way to appeal to his audience, something that would make them believe in the power of this 'Jesus.'

### **Psalm 16:**

- "I have no good apart from you." No good apart from God. We might think we can have what is good outside God, but without God, what we have will lack in meaning, be found wanting, empty.
- body and soul - this psalmist knows that both belong to God and are in God's hands.
- "fullness of joy." Again, God can satisfy us, fill us, in a way other things can't.

### **1 Peter 1:3-9:**

- "inheritance." This is a funny word - when we think of inheriting, we can think of money left to us by relatives, or perhaps genes or traits that we get from our parents, grandparents. 1 Peter says that we *inherit* from Christ hope of resurrection, eternal life. I'm not sure that's how I would describe how we receive our hope.
- "the genuineness of your faith" 1 Peter says our faith, tested by fire, is more precious than gold. Note, importantly, that 1 Peter does not claim *God* tests our faith, but simply that "various trials" can test our faith. When and how has your faith been tested?
- "although you have not seen him, you love him." Ah, that's faith.
- "the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls." Hm. An interesting statement - in line with *sola fide* theology I guess. But I think it is important to know if by "salvation" 1 Peter means eternity - later, or something that we can take part in right now, right here.

### **John 20:19-31:**

- Ah, doubting Thomas. Most of us are less excited than I am to think of ourselves as being like Judas, but doubting Thomas we can relate to all too well. Who wouldn't want to see for himself, when everyone else had the benefit of seeing the risen Christ up close and personal?
- "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe." Maybe today it is harder for us to take things on faith because we are so good at finding tangible - or at least scientific - proof for so many things. We can prove so much with our God-given minds - why not prove God? Prove Jesus? What do you believe without proof? Can you prove someone's love for you or yours for them? We try, but in the end, we just must trust.
- John is obviously concerned with verifying the physical nature of Jesus' resurrection by having Thomas touch and feel Jesus, see the wounds. To me, as I mention in the Acts passage, I think the life of Jesus gets ignored in our obsession with his death and resurrection. Obviously, his death and resurrection are important to us - but would they be important if he had taught nothing in his life? If he had not been in such radical ministry for three years? So, John wants us to know Jesus' resurrection is the real deal. That's fine by me - but the statements about belief are more powerful in this passage, I think. More challenging. *By Beth Quick*

## SERMON OUTLINE

### John 20:19-31 the doors were locked

News of the Resurrection brought joy to the disciples as they remembered the predictions of Jesus that he would rise again – but it also brought them a sense of fear & trepidation...

**1. The Panic of the disciples:-** as we see them in the Upper Room on the evening of that 1<sup>st</sup> Easter day - *the doors of the house were locked for fear of the Jews*. They were marked men because of their association with Jesus.. Now they dreaded what the authorities might do to them following the investigation of the Empty Tomb & the rumours that were now rife in the city. What were they going to do?

**2. The Presence of Jesus:-** In the midst of their fear & anguish suddenly *Jesus came and stood among them & said, 'Peace be with you.'* & he showed them his hands & his side – the wounds of his passion. What a wonderful experience for them! *Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord*. Locked doors could not keep him out! Sadly many people today have their hearts locked fast against Jesus to prevent him entering their lives...

**3. The Problem for Thomas:-** He couldn't face meeting with the disciples – kept to himself – missed out on a wonderful experience! And worse – he didn't believe the disciples when they said v25: *'We have seen the Lord.- so we note Thomas'*

**a) Failure:** He has long been noted for his doubt -*Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hand.... I will not believe.'*

**b) Faith:** *26 A week later... Thomas was with them & Jesus wonderfully appeared*. This time there is no **failure** – but **faith** as he proclaims v28: *'My Lord and my God!'* – no doubt in his mind as he professes his faith in the risen Lord. May we too declare our faith in Jesus as did Thomas: *'My Lord and my God!'*

*By Norman Porteous*

## SERMON SOURCES

### Reflections on the collects

Bosco Peters in New Zealand presents this:

Almighty God,  
by the glorious resurrection of your Son Jesus Christ,  
you have broken the power of death  
and brought life and immortality to light;  
grant that we who have been raised with him  
may triumph over all temptation  
and rejoice in the hope of eternal glory;  
through him who lives and reigns with you  
and the Holy Spirit,  
one God now and for ever.

**Amen. NZPB p.595c**

Sometimes Christ's resurrection is confused with resuscitation. As if Christ's resurrection undoes the crucifixion. The affirmation of the bodily resurrection can, in the context of this confusion, lead to the naïve question about when did Jesus die again. But Christ's resurrection is not merely resuscitation. Christ's resurrection is the claim that he went

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through death, and, as it were, out the other side to a new type of existence. For Jesus, the resurrection is not merely the next stage in his life, it is God's giving back the whole of his human life, so that in his resurrection the whole of his life, including his death is present.

Science is the study of cause and effect that can be verified and repeated experimentally. The resurrection of Christ is outside of Science precisely because of the claim that this never occurred previously and there is no subsequent example. It has not and cannot be repeated. It is unique.

The collect highlights that we share in, we participate in Christ's resurrection. We do this in our baptism, renewed in communion, lived out in our lives, focused in the liturgy. The collect prays for two benefits: our overcoming temptations against our growth into this fullness of life, and our holding to the hope that this fullness of life will be fulfilled.

The collect is drawn from Frank Colquhoun's Parish Prayers (no 320) – with clear reference to 2 Tim 1:10 - and is found in BCP (USA) for Tuesday of Easter Week (and in the funeral rite of that book) as:

O God,  
who by the glorious resurrection of your Son Jesus Christ destroyed death and brought life and immortality to light:  
Grant that we, who have been raised with him, may abide in his presence and rejoice in the hope of eternal glory;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be dominion and praise for ever and ever. **Amen.**

Restated by the Sisters of St Helena as:

O God,  
who by the glorious resurrection of Jesus Christ destroyed death, and brought life and immortality to light:  
Grant that we, who now share in the resurrection, may abide in Christ's presence and rejoice in the hope of eternal glory;  
through Jesus Christ our Savior, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be dominion and praise for ever and ever. **Amen.**

### **Doubting Thomas**

Susan Andrews opens her sermon thus: When I was in seminary, Doubting Thomas was my soul mate. Jesus kept "appearing " to my fellow students within the rich stories of the Christian tradition. But like Thomas, I never seemed to be there when Jesus arrived. Why? Because the absurdity of the resurrection rumor had sent me away. I could not see the mark on Jesus' hands or touch the wound in his side. So I moved down the street to the Unitarians. Their faith made sense, with its distant and daring God, its passionate witness for justice, its bold support for inclusive ministry. Yes, theirs was a doing faith, a touchable faith, an energetic faith. And I didn't have to sit around waiting for a dead God to reappear. But then a strange thing happened. I found myself restless and filled with sadness. I missed Jesus."

<http://www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=590>

### Realities Old and New

A straightforward sermon on Easter and redemption. Thomas, not surprisingly is the theme. "Thomas, in my opinion, has always gotten a bad rap. We know him as "the doubter." But I would suggest that this passage is not primarily about doubt; rather, it is about reality.

"Thomas is first and foremost, you see, a realist. For instance, in the 14th chapter of the Gospel According to John, when Jesus says mysteriously, "I go to prepare a place for you.... You know the way to the place where I am going," it is Thomas the pragmatist who replies truthfully, "Lord, we don't know where you are going; how can we know then the way?" (14:5). And in the 11th chapter, when Jesus speaks of going back to Judea, Thomas knows that for Jesus to return to Jerusalem is to go to his death. Thomas was no fool. He counted the costs before making a decision. Nevertheless, it is he who bravely urges the others to follow Jesus: "Let us also go also, that we may die with him" (11:16).

"In this light, Thomas' reaction to the news of the risen Christ should not be surprising. He had been hardened and tempered by his experience in the world. He was, above all else, a realist. And for Thomas reality had come as never before just days earlier in the form of a cross, when his master and friend had been crucified; when he had fled and deserted Jesus; when he realized that the hopes and expectations of the last three years were as dead as his beloved Lord."

[http://day1.org/1082-realities\\_old\\_and\\_new](http://day1.org/1082-realities_old_and_new)

### Employing blind faith

"So the other disciples told him, 'We have seen the Lord.' But he said to them, 'Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe.'" When Jesus appeared again to the disciples, "...he said to Thomas, 'Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe.'"

This makes you want to avoid being like Thomas, doesn't it? But the story is incredible, and perhaps we would have doubted too.

Let's fast-forward to today and look at the times we are asked to employ blind faith in our everyday lives. When we use the bank machine, will money be available to us? When we board a plane, will it actually fly? In the scriptures, Jesus asked his disciples to have faith —many times during his life with them, and especially after his death. This faith was meant to set them free: to set them free from the limitations of knowledge based on sensory perception, to set them free to share their faith with all who would believe.

### Children's address

We do not know exactly where the disciples were when Jesus was crucified - they obviously were not close by him. Peter even denied knowing him.

Someone who was not counted as among his closest disciples came and took Jesus' body away from the cross to put into the tomb. So, it may have been understandable if Jesus, when he rose from the dead, had some angry words to say to his friends. Ask the

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children/young people what they think that Jesus could have said ...such as “Where were you when I needed you? “How could you do that to me? etc etc.

They are words that we may have said...relating to how we may have felt - but in our gospel reading today - we hear that they are not the words that Jesus said. The first word Jesus said to his friends was “Peace”.

After all that he had gone through, and after being virtually deserted by his disciples - his first word to them was a word of peace. The message of peace was sung by the angels at Jesus’ birth and here we have the message of peace once more. More than ever, Jesus wants people to experience that peace and also to pass that peace on to one another.

He wants us to experience that peace and also to pass that peace on to one another. Let’s do that right now as we move around and share a sign of peace with everyone.

The peace of the Lord be always with you  
**And also with you.**