

Lectionary Faith-Sharing Community
SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER
SUNDAY OF DIVINE MERCY

Cycle B - April 11, 2021



OPENING PRAYER

Guide: *Give thanks to the Lord for he is good, his love is everlasting.*

All: **Let the house of Israel say, "His mercy endures forever"**

Leader: Let those who fear the Lord say, "His mercy endures forever."

All: **Give thanks to the Lord for he is good, his love is everlasting.**

Guide: *We invoke the presence of the Holy Spirit:*

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love. Send, Lord your spirit and renew the face of the earth. Oh God, that you have instructed the hearts of your faithful with the light of the Holy Spirit, grant us through the same spirit that always enjoy her divine consolation. By Christ, our Lord. Amen.

FIRST READING [Acts 4 (32-35)]

The community of believers was of one heart and mind, and no one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they had everything in common.

With great power the apostles bore witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great favor was accorded them all.

There was no needy person among them, for those who owned property or houses would sell them, bring the proceeds of the sale, and put them at the feet of the apostles, and they were distributed to each according to need.

During this Easter season, the first reading is not taken from the Old Testament, but from the Book of Acts of the Apostles, to enlighten us about the early days of the Church. This book is attributed to the evangelist Luke, and three different summaries of the life of the early Christians are found in its pages. Apart from this week's passage, you can read 2:42-47 and 5:12-16.

We immediately notice the spirit of communion of the believers. It is not about something superficial or about appearances, since it is clear that people came to "think and feel the same". This is manifested in an external sign, such as, for example, the communion and sharing of goods.

The author, in a masterful way, incorporates into this narrative the apostolic testimony of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. And it is precisely this relevant fact what motivates Christians to practice this communal love. The new life in Christ and faith in him made possible a new way of thinking and living. This consequence continues to be valid for us Christians of the Third Millennium, because whoever truly welcomes the risen Christ into his life experiences a radical change, and true fraternal communion is not difficult.

- (1) To what extent are we willing to share everything in the way that the early Christians did?
- (2) Is there someone close to you who is in need? Is your conscience clear regarding your way of proceeding regarding such need?
- (3) Is there some kind of necessity that you would like to solve but your resources do not allow it?
- (4) Could you join a group or organization that brings together the efforts of a few in order to help many?
- (5) What would we be lacking to better emulate the community of the first Christians?
- (6) What was important to the early Christians: ceremonies, a beautiful liturgy, or practicing the example of Jesus Christ?
- (7) Can you have both? (Ceremonies and faith put into practical life) Which one do we give more importance to?

SECOND READING [1 John 5 (1-6)]

Beloved:

Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is begotten by God, and everyone who loves the Father loves also the one begotten by him. In this way we know that we love the children of God when we love God and obey his commandments.

For the love of God is this, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome, for whoever is begotten by God conquers the world. And the victory that conquers the world is our faith.

Who indeed is the victor over the world but the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? This is the one who came through water and blood, Jesus Christ, not by water alone, but by water and blood. The Spirit is the one that testifies, and the Spirit is truth.

The first letter of John assures us that faith in Christ makes us children of God. In that same letter, the apostle insists on the theme of love, and shows the relationship between faith and love. There cannot be one without the other. Love for others is proof that you have faith in Jesus Christ. You cannot believe in Jesus Christ and at the same time stop loving your neighbor. Likewise, love of others cannot be separated from love of God.

Christians come to know and love God through Jesus Christ. Therefore, keeping the commandments is not a complicated matter, nor a burdensome obligation, but the natural consequence of a love that moves us to desire to please God's will, just as it is not uncomfortable to please a loved one.

- (1) Discuss: What is more important: to believe in Jesus Christ or to practice works of charity?
- (2) What does this passage tell you? Why?
- (3) "His commandments from him are not heavy" Do you agree? Why?

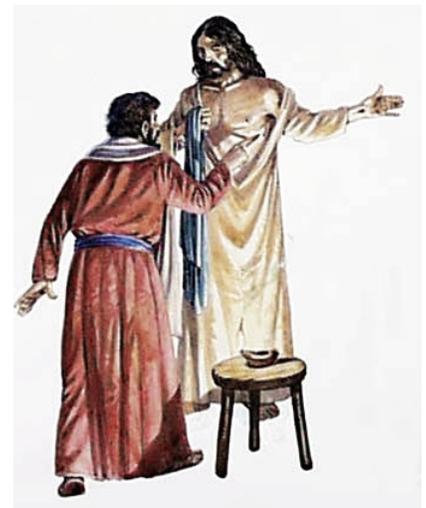
GOSPEL [John 20 (19-31)]

On the evening of that first day of the week, when the doors were locked, where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, "Peace be with you." When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. The disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained." Thomas, called Didymus, one of the Twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples said to 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 into the nailmarks and put my hand into his side, I will not believe."

Now a week later his disciples were again inside and Thomas was with them. Jesus came, although the doors were locked, and stood in their midst and said, "Peace be with you." Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and see my hands, and bring your hand and put it into my side, and do not be unbelieving, but believe."

Thomas answered and said to him, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus said to him, "Have you come to believe because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed."

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples that are not written in this book. But these are written that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that through this belief you may have life in his name.



Each evangelist presents the events after the Resurrection in a different way. In the case of John, whose text is the one that is proclaimed this week, we see that Jesus appears twice to his disciples, and putting aside the anecdotal detail that we always remember with more intensity (the doubt of Thomas), there are several very interesting elements which is worth considering.



The one who appears to the disciples is the same Jesus who from the cross attracted everyone to him, since he gave his life for love. And the proof is the crucifixion marks on his body. It is Jesus, whom they had not seen for three days, but now he appears to them glorified. That is why it can transmit to them the peace of God, which gives them the strength to overcome fear. (The greeting "Peace be with you" can be read three times in the text).

He also confirms to them what was promised at the Last Supper about the coming of the Holy Spirit, which will occur fifty days later, when the apostles are reunited during the celebration of Pentecost. Another thing worth noting is the institution of the sacrament of reconciliation. The disciples of Christ have as a mission for the world to extend God's forgiveness to all. The Work of Christ has been a work of salvation and the disciples have no other task than to continue this mission that Jesus Christ began.

- (1) The disciples were behind closed doors. How can this attitude be understood?
- (2) Are there times in your life when fear supersedes reason?
- (3) What calmed the disciples' fears? What could calm our fears?
- (4) How do you imagine Thomas' faith was after his encounter with the Risen One?
- (5) Are there doubts in your faith? Where can they lead if you are looking for the truth that will clear up those doubts? Where can they lead if you leave them in just questions?
- (6) Share with the group a moment like that of Thomas: a doubt or question about our faith that you later managed to clarify. Explain if that helped you grow spiritually.
- (7) Read the accounts of the resurrection and compare them: Matthew 28 (1-20); Mark 16 (9-20); Luke 24 (36-53)

CLOSING PRAYER

Leader: *Lord of the day and night, of the beginning and of the end: At the closing of this meeting, once again we lift up our hearts to You, divine source of all life.*

All: **We thank you for the gifts you have bestowed on us. We thank you for the love expressed in companionship and understanding, mutual respect and shared ideas. We give you thanks for your holy power that will help us in our concerns that we have shared. For these and all the gifts that come from You, we give you thanks.**

Leader: *Lord hear our prayers* (attendees can propose their own needs of prayer)

All: **In the same way in which we have being blessed by your presence as we meet, we ask now to bless our safe return to our homes. May your holy blessing be over us + in the name of the Father ...**

Leader: *May the King of the eternal glory gather us together in His heavenly banquet. Amen.*