

28th April 2019 (2nd Sunday of Easter, Year C)

Acts 5:12-16; Psalm 117(118):2-4,22-27; Apocalypse 1:9-13,17-19; John 20:19-31.

'My Lord and my God!'

The narrative of the resurrection of Jesus in today's gospel invites us to look at this reality both as a physical event as well as an act of faith.

Jesus who appears to the apostles, locked up and hiding from the 'Jews,' is very much a physical being. He inhabits a body that still carries the marks of the crucifixion on his hands and on his side, and is a body that can be touched and experienced, as any other human body can. Yet it is a glorified body, no longer bound by limitations that define humanity on earth. All our experience is defined by space and time; whatever we do occupies space and happens in time. Jesus' resurrected body is now a heavenly body and hence is not limited by space, or does not occupy space, and is not limited by time. It is not possible for us to fully understand this concept, and it would not be helpful for us to dwell on this reality for too long. It is enough for us to understand the disciples' dilemma as they experienced a physical body not bound by earthy limitations.

The gospel of John invites us on a journey of faith. For those who accept the reality of the resurrection, for those who believe, the resurrection is the mark of a new beginning, a renewed creation.

Jesus comes to bring peace: 'Peace be with you,' or rather, 'Peace is with you!' While to this day, this expression is a common greeting, on Jesus' lips it has a much deeper meaning. Jesus is the one who brings true and lasting peace. The disciples are afraid of the 'Jews' and lock themselves away, just as fear and lack of faith locks them away spiritually and emotionally. This does not stop Jesus from stepping in and offering them peace! The presence of Jesus, and his gift of peace brings joy to the apostles who are now renewed in their faith.

Jesus breathes the Holy Spirit on his disciples. He had already given them the Spirit on the cross, but now he invites them with him into a new creation. In the book of Genesis (2:7), when God forms man he breathes his Spirit in him, giving him life. Jesus now performs the same action inviting the disciples to be part of a new creation. 'Receive the Holy Spirit,' the spirit of God! This is the true meaning of the resurrection. In a similar way, in the first verse of the book of Genesis we have an image of total confusion before the world was created. God's world brings light and order to this confusion just as now Jesus' words bring joy and peace in the frightened world of the disciples.

When God created the world, God saw that it was all good; there was no sin or death in the world. In the book of Genesis, sin and death come into the world through the disobedience of the first man and the first woman. Now that Jesus has brought about a new creation, for those who believe, sin is forgiven. Faith in the risen Christ is door to participation into the new creation.

Thomas comes in later and declares, 'My Lord and My God!' This is the climax of the whole story and the climax of the believer's journey of faith. In the opening of his gospel, John tells us that the Word was God. Thomas now confirms that Jesus, the Word of God, is Lord and God! The intention of this gospel is for us now to come to this realisation and that we too can declare Jesus as our Lord and God.

Thomas and the other disciples believed after having seen the risen Lord, even if this challenged their understanding. Truly blessed are we who now have faith in Jesus, the risen one and the Christ, even though we cannot see! Our faith depends on the witness of those who came before us, just as our children depend on the witness of our faith.

Let us, with Thomas, declare: My Lord and My God!

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