

## Read

Acts of the Apostles

2:42-47

Psalm 118:2-4, 13-15,  
22-24

1 Peter 1:3-9

John 20:19-31

## Second Sunday of Easter / Sunday of Divine Mercy

April 19, 2020



### REFLECTION

Throughout Easter Time when Jesus tell the disciples, "Peace be with you," Jesus does much more than calm the fears that emerge from encountering a friend who was dead just a few days ago (John 20:21). When Jesus says, "Peace be with you," Jesus tells his followers that anxiety, turmoil, and confusion cannot inhibit encountering and living the Resurrection (John 20:21). Living the Resurrection means living in hope. Living the Resurrection means knowing that sadness, sickness, and death never win, and that life and love always prevail. Living the Resurrection means building authentic community so to break down walls of prejudice, fear and indifference.

Today's Gospel shows that the disciples continued to gather after Jesus died. Luke writes in the Acts of the Apostles that the early Christian communities devoted themselves to fellowship, prayer, and the breaking of the bread. These communities were not formed because Christ died. Rather, these communities formed because Christ died and rose from the dead. Just like the early disciples, we are called to continue the work of the Resurrection in the same way.

Sometimes we fail to encounter the Risen Lord and live the Resurrection. Like Thomas, we miss opportunities to grow in faith. We do not always use our voices and lives to proclaim the Good News. Even so, we remember the peace Christ bestows on us and recognize we can continue to grow in life and love.



### ACTION

Thomas must have been disappointed that he was not present with the others in the upper room when Jesus first appeared, and perhaps his initial reaction is more frustration than doubt. Thomas' friends saw the Risen Lord and he missed the opportunity. As you continue to celebrate during Easter Time, make an effort to say yes all the good and life-giving opportunities you are offered. Do not let fear or inhibition hold you back. Rather, move forward with the peace and confidence that comes from Christ.



### QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today's readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ Have you ever experienced FOMO ("fear of missing out")? If so, how did you respond to those feelings? If not, why do you think that reality is so common in our lives today?
- ❖ Jesus says, "Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed" (John 20:29). What are some things that you believe even without having direct evidence?



April 19, 2020

## SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER (OR SUNDAY OF DIVINE MERCY)

### LECTIONARY #43A

Acts of the Apostles 2:42-47

Psalm 118:2-4, 13-15, 22-24

1 Peter 1:3-9

John 20:19-31

### Prepare for the Word

*The following elements may be used by the catechist, teacher, or youth minister to prepare to facilitate today's session with teens. You may integrate this information into the reflection and discussion on today's readings.*

### Leader's Context

In this week's Gospel, Jesus appears to the disciples. The Apostle, Thomas, was not with the disciples when they encountered Jesus. When the disciples told Thomas they had "seen the Lord," Thomas doubted them (John 20:25). He wanted proof. This Gospel is an important message for teens who are coming from a place of questioning. It is important to acknowledge the human reality of skepticism as well as our Christian call to faith without "proof."

**Q FOCUS:** *A faith that questions.*

### Liturgical Calendar Connection

Display the liturgical calendar and point out the Second Sunday of Easter. This day is the Octave (eighth) Day of Easter, and since the year 2000 has been celebrated as Divine Mercy Sunday. Liturgically, the Octave of Easter focuses on the love, mercy, and forgiveness of God; therefore, it is appropriate the Octave should end with Divine Mercy Sunday.

### Church Teaching Connection

The Catholic faith has always held faith and reason as two pillars upholding truth. In fact, Catholics believe that science and religion are *not* at odds with one another. Faith and reason are compatible, and this gives Catholics the space to ask pertinent questions (see *Gaudium et spes*, 59).

### Hear the Word

*Use this resource, a Lectionary, or a Bible to proclaim the reading. The book should be held reverently or placed on a lectern. If possible, light a candle that is placed near where the Gospel will be proclaimed. Gesture for teens to stand.*

### Gospel Acclamation

*Use the same musical setting that is used in your parish or at school Masses. Teens may help with music and proclaim the Gospel.*

Alleluia, alleluia.

### Gospel

John 20:19-31

**Reader:** A reading from the holy Gospel according to John.

**All:** Glory to you, O Lord.

*All make the Sign of the Cross on their forehead, lips, and heart.*

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.

**Reader:** The Gospel of the Lord.

**All:** Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

*Everyone may be seated.*

## Reflect on the Word

*When beginning the reflection and discussion about today's readings, first refer to the handout for today. Ask teens what they learned about themselves and about Christian discipleship from performing the action for the week and journaling. Ask teens about the readings of the day: What struck them? What do they think the readings mean? How do the readings affect their own lives? Then begin the following reflection:*

Today's Gospel shows us a very human reality of the Resurrection. The disciples are afraid, and Thomas doubts, but they are all filled with so much joy when Jesus appears to them. Thomas always seems to be criticized. We call him "doubting" Thomas . . . but, can we really blame him? Put yourself in his shoes for a moment. You've been following your friend and teacher for a couple of years; he has just been publicly executed, and you and your fellow disciples have gone into hiding because you are afraid of being imprisoned or killed. Now suddenly your friends are telling you the impossible: that your friend and mentor has risen from the dead.

► **Have you ever heard something that was too good to be true? Something that you really wanted to happen, but you were so scared of it not being true that you couldn't quite believe it?**

Of course Thomas wanted to believe in the Resurrection! But believing in something so miraculous is hard, especially when you consider how scared the disciples were. And it's worth noting that the other disciples got to see Jesus the first time he appeared to them. There were probably others who, like Thomas, couldn't really bring themselves to believe until they actually saw the Risen Christ in person. Thomas, and any other doubters, probably felt left out or isolated because they missed out.

► **Can you name a time when you felt challenged by somebody else's faith?**

► **Have you ever felt like you didn't quite fit in because you couldn't believe as easily as others seem to?**

One of the big challenges in today's Gospel is when Jesus says, "Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed" (John 20:29). One the one hand, that wouldn't seem to be so hard for us. After all, we ourselves weren't there at the Resurrection; we didn't get to see Jesus walking around, and we don't get to see his wounds for ourselves. So it might seem that our only choice is to believe without any evidence. But we do have something to "see" that can help our faith. We have over two thousand years and millions of Christians over that time who have followed the teachings of Christ. We have the lives of the saints, and their tremendous acts of faith. And we have the witness of our family and friends who live their lives day by day according to the way of Christ. It's true that these things are not the same as scientific proof. But that's part of the challenge of faith. We are called to believe in the Resurrection without being able to see it with our own eyes. Jesus is right: to believe without seeing *is* a blessing. But that doesn't mean it is wrong to have questions or to seek more evidence. We belong to a Church whose teaching has been evolving over two millennia, and at no point did the Church say "we now have all the answers." The history of Christianity is one of journeying, of seeking, of asking questions. Jesus did not reject Thomas for

doubting, and he will not reject us for asking questions and searching for evidence to support our faith.

- ▶ What do you question?
- ▶ What do you seek?
- ▶ What do you doubt?
- ▶ What do you believe?

## Wrapping It Up

*Consider these points to conclude the discussion and reflection. Integrate the thoughts and ideas that surfaced during the discussion as well as the "Church Teaching Connection" on page 176.*

**When have you been a "doubter," like Thomas?**

**What sort of faith questions do you have that still haven't been answered? Where do you think you can go to for answers to them?**

**Do you ever feel left out when it comes to faith? Or are you someone who always has faith, even when your classmates doubt? How does that make you feel?**

## Act on the Word

### Questioning like Thomas

*Have the students break into groups of two to four. Give each student some blank paper and a writing utensil. There will be three stages to this exercise: individual reflection and writing, sharing with a partner or small group, and large group sharing.*

Imagine that you are in a one-on-one conversation with Jesus, and he has agreed to answer and explain every question that you have regarding his miracles. Take a few minutes to think, and then write down two to three questions that you would ask him.

Allow several minutes (five to eight) for this thinking/writing stage. Now ask the students to share their questions with their partner/small group. Emphasize that students should not try to answer one another's questions—they should just focus on listening to one another. Allow between five to fifteen minutes for this, depending on how large your sharing groups are.

Finally, ask some individual students to share their questions with the whole room. As with before, do not try to answer those questions; that is not the purpose of this exercise. The goal of this exercise is for us to see that almost everyone has questions or doubts. It is part of our human nature to be inquisitive and to try to explain the world around us. A good practice during this large-group sharing is to affirm students in their questioning and to gently guide them toward the idea that faith sometimes demands belief without explanation, but should also not be complacent in not seeking greater understanding.

## Closing Prayer

*Lord Jesus Christ,  
we praise and glorify you on this day of salvation.  
May the glorious fact of your Resurrection dispel  
our doubts and fears,  
so that we may serve your people on earth  
until we rejoice with you in heaven,  
where you live and reign for ever and ever.  
Amen.*

## For Next Sunday

*To help teens prepare for next Sunday's Mass, print, email, or share on a blog or social media the handout found on the next page. The JPG and PDF files are available at [www.ltp.org/lwgr](http://www.ltp.org/lwgr). Encourage teens to attend Mass with family or friends.*