

# Read

Acts 4:32-35

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

1 John 5:1-6

John 20:19-31

## LIVING THE WORD

### Second Sunday of Easter / Sunday of Divine Mercy

April 11, 2021



#### REFLECTION

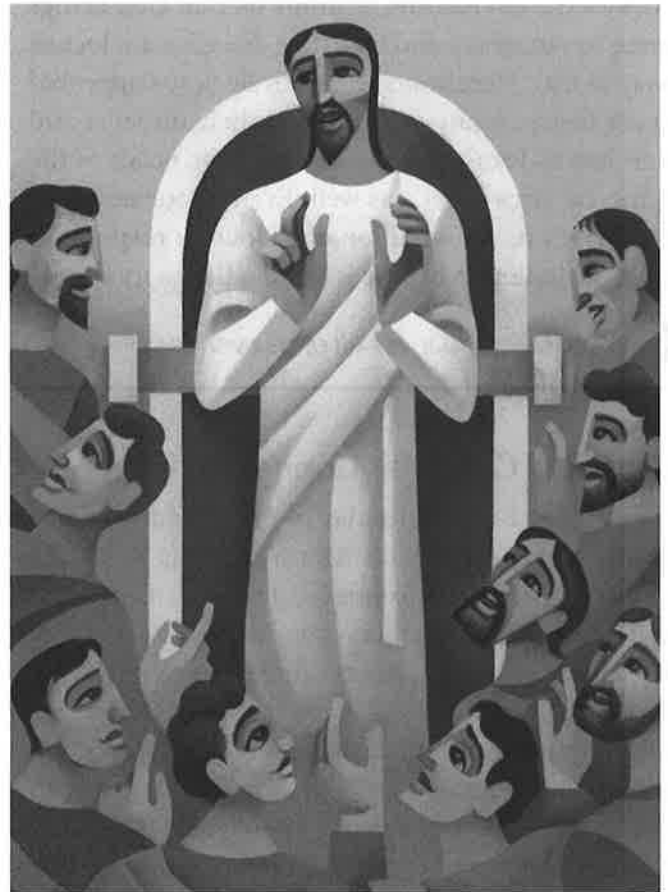
We live in a world that demands empirical evidence, that is proof based on what we can see, hear, smell, taste and touch. Instead of simply listening to what people say, it is easy to jump to a response that demands proof. On social media, people often say, "Take a picture or it didn't happen." With this, can we really blame Thomas for his reaction in today's Gospel? Is it really that much different than how you might respond if someone told you that they saw Jesus? The challenge and opportunity of living our faith is recognizing that some things cannot be explained by logic or evidence. We rely on the Holy Spirit to lead us to this faith and help us to remain strong in it.

#### ? QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today's readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ How would you define the word "faith"?
- ❖ What are some challenges to living out your faith today?

#### ⚡ ACTION

How would you tell the story of the Resurrection to someone who has never heard about Jesus? Spend some time this week writing your response to this question. If you feel the Holy Spirit moving you, you may want to share your reflections with a friend or family member who might need to hear the truth about Jesus' Resurrection and the salvation that he offers.





April 11, 2021

## SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER / SUNDAY OF DIVINE MERCY

### LECTIONARY #44B

Acts 4:32-35

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

1 John 5:1-6

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

Today's Gospel reading reminds us that God brings peace to our worry and fear. The disciples are locked away in fear, literally and figuratively. Jesus appeared to the disciples anyway to dispel their unbelief and fear. Just as Jesus gave the disciples the peace of the Spirit, he gives it to us as well. Even in our unbelief, Jesus loves us unconditionally. How we respond to Jesus' invitation to believe is our challenge this week.

**Q** **FOCUS:** *God loves all of us even in our unbelief.*

### Liturgical Calendar Connection

Today is the Second Sunday of Easter, but it is also Divine Mercy Sunday. St. Maria Faustina Kowalska was a Polish nun who obeyed Jesus' command to write down the revelations she received from God. They focused on God's overwhelming mercy that he pours out on the world. Her writings encourage Christians to seek out God's mercy and call upon him in all circumstances. They focus on trusting in God and accepting his mercy completely. Pope John Paul II canonized her in April of 2000 and set the Second Sunday of Easter as Divine Mercy Sunday. This Sunday is a time to reflect on God's great gift of mercy and love.

### Church Teaching Connection

"The present-day mentality, more perhaps than that of people in the past, seems opposed to a God of mercy, and in fact tends to exclude from life and to remove from the human heart the very idea of mercy. The word and the concept of 'mercy' seem to cause uneasiness in man, who, thanks to the enormous development of science and technology, never before known in history, has become the master of the earth and has subdued and dominated it. . . . In fact, revelation and faith teach us not only to meditate in the abstract upon the mystery of God as 'Father of mercies,' but also to have recourse to that mercy in the name of Christ and in union with him" (*Dives in misericordia*, 2).

## 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:*

► **Why do you think the disciples locked the room they were in? Who were they trying to keep out?**

It is likely that the disciples were afraid of being arrested or killed for believing Jesus was truly the Messiah. They likely hid from the authorities trying to come up with a plan of how to survive. We have

seen this fear earlier in the Gospel; think about how Peter denied knowing Jesus three times, because he was afraid that he would be sentenced to death along with Jesus. This does not make the disciples bad Christians; it just proves that they are human.

► **Think about a time when you were scared. How did it limit what you did?**

As followers of Jesus in the days after his death on the cross, the disciples did not know what to do. They had no assurance that they would be anything more than a group of people who had followed someone who was put to death. They did not know, as we do today, that God would bless their work and spread it throughout the world so that countless people throughout the ages would come to follow Christ. Jesus understands the disciples' anxiety and fear when he appeared to them in the upper room. He offers them peace and reassurance that he is the Messiah.

► **When you have been afraid, or in need of courage, how did God reassure you?**

Jesus predicted before his death on the cross that he would triumph over death and rise from the dead. He must have known that the disciples needed a renewal of their faith and a commissioning to spread the Good News to others, so he appeared to them and showed them that it was truly him by showing them his wounds. They rejoice because their fears are eased. Jesus has given them the gift of his presence and peace once more.

► **How is God's peace a gift?**

► **Where have you felt this gift in your life?**

Thomas was not with the disciples when Jesus appeared and did not receive this gift of Jesus' presence and peace. It is only natural that he would remain wary. After all, it is quite unbelievable that someone should rise from the dead. None of the disciples fully believed this until they saw Jesus again. Today's Gospel passage reminds us that we all tend to doubt and worry, but God's presence in our lives can transform all of that into joy.

When Jesus appears to the disciples, he is affirming that everything he told them is true. His life was not in vain. His death was not the end, but the beginning. As the Messiah, he truly died to save

all of humanity. There was much to celebrate! By appearing to the disciples, they are now renewed with energy to spread the Gospel message because they witnessed Jesus' Resurrection.

► **How can recalling Jesus' Resurrection help you to overcome fears or worries?**

## 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 168.*

**Jesus loves us unconditionally, even in our doubt and fear.**

**Faith leads us to Jesus, who died and rose again to give us new life.**

**Jesus' presence brings peace.**

## Act on the Word

### Divine Mercy Chaplet

*You will need enough rosaries for each teen to have one. You can check with your parish office or a local Christian supply store. You will also need to be familiar with the history of Divine Mercy Sunday and how to pray the chaplet. Instructions for prayer can be found here: <https://www.thedivinemercy.org/message/devotions/praythechaplet.php>. The story of St. Maria Faustina can be found here: <https://www.thedivinemercy.org/message/stfaustina/bio.php>.*

Share with the young people some of the history of Divine Mercy and the story of St. Maria Faustina. Her story reminds us to trust in God's mercy and grace.

Distribute the rosaries and pray the Divine Mercy Chaplet together. Before you pray, invite the young people to spend several minutes in silent prayer, bring their concerns and joys before God. Encourage them to consider where God is leading them and how they can place their trust in him.

## Closing Prayer

*Risen Lord,  
your mercy extends to all the earth and calls  
us together in faith.  
May you walk into our midst this day and guide  
us to new life.  
In moments of doubt and despair,  
may we never forget that you are always near.  
You live and reign with the Father in the unity  
of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, 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.*