

Fr James' homily for the Second Sunday of Easter 2021



First Reading: Acts of the Apostles 2:42-47
Second Reading: First Letter of St Peter 1:3-9
Gospel: John 20:19-31

Alleluia! Christ is Risen! You know, perhaps, what I am going to say: It is STILL Easter Day today, and has been for the last week. I hope amid all the stresses of these days you have had a week filled with the Good News that Jesus is risen from the grave.

Below I in fact reproduce some of what I wrote for this Sunday last year, at the beginning of Lockdown One, as it is very relevant today. I talk of the need to savour and understand what is happening when we worship, especially when we are gathered in church, for this is of the essence of being a disciple of the Risen Lord. Last year we were prevented from gathering. Today things are different. Today too we have to start planning for tomorrow's Church and tomorrow's parish - and that means knowing and savouring our faith always more and more.

Always today the Gospel is this awesome scene from the end of John's Gospel. In it John describes in a way all of the life of the Christian down through all the ages. He tells us it is the "First Day of the Week", the Day of Resurrection, Sunday, one week on from the Resurrection. The First Day of the Week reminds us of the story of creation. In the resurrection of Jesus, God the Father is re-creating the world. So he is at all times. OUR Sunday should also be built around this truth.

The we are told that the disciples are gathered in fear. Symbolically they are locked in, as it is true that at all times our sins and fears isolate us. This last year has been (as I wrote for last year below) in a way a privileged experience of this truth. It has been painful, yes, but we must use this pain to understand the power of God.

For, despite everything the Risen Christ breaks into the locked room. God breaks in to that from which we cannot break out. God shows them his wounds. His wounds are the results of our sins, yet he bears them. And to all of this he speaks words of peace. There is nothing which is beyond God's love and redemptive power. This is why God, in more recent time, has chosen this Sunday for his Church to reflect on the meaning of his Divine Mercy.

Today especially, as symbolic of every Sunday and indeed every day, we are invited by the Risen Christ to see God re-creating the world: he breathes on them the breath of creation...except of course for Thomas. It takes a little longer for him because to

begin with he is NOT THERE. To begin with, Thomas, meaning well, thinks he should build his life around his own initiative. Soon he learns, in a wonderful way, to let go and to offer his presence as a gift to God so that God can work his grace in Thomas.

This is what every Sunday is for, and the value of our gathering together to worship. This year let us be thankful that we can do so, and let us ask God's wisdom to see what that means for our futures. Last year I wrote about our worship as follows, and it is still useful for today:

"It is a good and ancient spiritual practice to place yourself in the Gospel, to use your imagination to put yourself today right there in the room. The locked room. The room full of fear. As we engage in the worship of the Church remotely, in solitude, this is a big opportunity. Slowly read the scriptures of the day, perhaps more than once. After all, we have time! Close your eyes and put yourself into the room where the disciples were.

So then, on this great Easter Day, ideally at the time you know Mass is being offered, stop to worship in your "locked room", that is, the place where we are cooped up by no choice of our own. Thanks be if you have others in the house to share this with. Say clearly what Intention you offer the time of worship for, as you should remember your intention for Mass in Church. As previously mentioned, savour the scriptures slowly. Stand, perhaps, to read the Gospel. Pause and hear the words of Christ. Invite the risen Jesus into the fears that threaten to overwhelm us today. Next offer your Prayer of the Faithful. Pray for the Church. Maybe take a little tour in your imagination around the world and picture the Church there. Pray for the needs of the world, for wisdom for all people in this time of crisis. Pray for particular needs - and always remember to give thanks for graces. Pray for the souls of the departed, especially the victims of Covid-19 in their isolation. Ask the prayers of the saints...picture them and name them. Remember that the priest in Church is doing the same on your behalf. Then, make your act of contrition and of Spiritual Communion (resources available on this website). Rejoice that Jesus, risen from the dead, invites you to touch Him, to touch His sacred wounds, the mark of His love and has given you a vital job to do."

Fr Tom and I wish you a very blessed and joyful Easter!

Amen.

Fr James and Fr Tom wish you a blessed Sunday. Keep safe and well, and never hesitate to pick up the telephone and be in touch. See you in church I hope! Keep in close contact with the website for news of how practical plans are developing.