

## **The Second Sunday of Easter – a liturgy for worship at home**

### **Introduction**

In the Gospel today we find the disciples of Jesus, together, afraid, believing and yet doubting, wondering whether the news that Jesus had risen from death was too good to be true. In the same way we have come together as the community of Jesus. Yet we too as individuals are often timid and afraid, filled with questions, perhaps doubts, and a faith that is fragile. Let us like Thomas in the Gospel be renewed in our coming together in community, that we may discern the Lord's presence among us and hear his voice, so that we may be strengthened in faith and love.

### **Act of Penitence**

In baptism we died with Christ, so that as Christ was raised from the dead, we might walk in newness of life. Let us receive new life in him as we confess our sins in penitence and faith.

Lord Jesus, like Mary weeping at your tomb, we often fail to grasp the wonder of your living presence:

Lord, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, like the disciples behind locked doors, we are often afraid to be seen as your followers:

Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, like Thomas in the upper room, we are often slow to believe:

Lord, have mercy.

Lord, Breathe upon us your Spirit of peace that blows all our fears and failures away. Make us alive with you that we may walk with you the way to everlasting life. Amen.

### **Act of Praise**

The **Gloria** or some other hymn of praise, or this 'unfolding' of the ancient canticle, the **Te Deum**:

*Men and women: praise the God of Love. Earth and sky worship the Creator. Angelic powers of light eternal, penetrating the ancient dark: lift your voices with the song:*

*Holy, holy, holy, strange mysterious power, the whole creation is full of your glory. Saints and holy fools of every generation, sing alleluia, alleluia.*

*Prophets crying out for justice, sing alleluia, alleluia.*

*Martyrs who carried you in their wounds, scars embodied in their glory, sing alleluia, alleluia.*

*Your holy and stumbling people in all times and places, sing alleluia, alleluia.*

*Giver of life, of splendour and wonder, tender, of infinite patience!*

*Bearer of pain, graceful and true, with wounds bringing salve!*

*Maker of love, flaming and passionate, guiding us into the truth!*

*Universal Christ, we greet you in your glory, hidden deep in the being of God.*

*Word made flesh to deliver us, brought to life by human touch.*

*Glad to be born of Mary, embodying the divine, withdrawing the sting of death, terrifying us with love unbounded, offering to fulfil all we could desire, opening the road to God's presence for ever, guarding the freedom of the creation, yearning for the gathering of the harvest.*

*Come, then, judge and deliver us, who are freed at the cost of your life. Give us integrity to refuse what is evil; give us your Spirit to discern what is true, and lead us with all your saints to lands of eternal glory.*

### **Collect of the Day**

Risen Christ, for whom no door is locked, no entrance barred: open the doors of our hearts, that we may seek the good of others and walk the joyful road of sacrifice and peace, to the praise of God the Father. Amen.

### **Today's readings**

*A reading from the Acts of the Apostles*

*(4:32-35)*

The whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common. With great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. There was not a needy person among them, for as many as owned lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold. They laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need.

*For the word of the Lord: Thanks be to God.*

*Psalm 133*

Behold how good and pleasant it is to dwell together in unity.

It is like the precious oil upon the head, running down upon the beard.

Even on Aaron's beard, running down upon the collar of his clothing.

It is like the dew of Hermon running down upon the hills of Zion.

For there the Lord has promised his blessing: even life for evermore.

*Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.*

*A reading from the first letter of St John*

*(1:1 - 2.2)*

We declare to you what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life—this life was revealed, and we have seen it and testify to it, and declare to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was revealed to us—we declare to you what we have seen and heard so that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. We are writing these things so that our joy may be complete. This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light and in him there is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him while we are walking in darkness, we lie and do not do what is true; but if we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us. My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.

*For the word of the Lord: Thanks be to God.*

*An acclamation to greet the Gospel:*

Alleluia, alleluia!

Jesus said, 'You believe because you can see me.

Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe.'

Alleluia!

*Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John* (20:19 – 31)

When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then 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." When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told 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 in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe."

A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe." Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe." Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

*For the Gospel of the Lord: Praise to you, O Christ.*

### **Homily**

It is evening on the first day of the week. Although the sun has set and darkness covers the land, for the disciples of Jesus daylight has arrived. The message conveyed to them by Mary Magdalene that the Lord has risen from the dead becomes theirs to experience. Their fear, doubt and devastation are

suddenly overcome and replaced by sheer relief, wonder, joy, peace. Their darkness turns to light.

Jesus appears to his disciples. He is alive, though now in a very different mode of living. By God's grace they recognise him. He comes to reassure and encourage them, to strengthen them and give them peace. He comes to reconnect them with himself and with all that he had taught them. Most of all, he comes to commission them, equip them and send them out in the power of the Spirit to continue the work he had begun, the work of building the kingdom of God on earth.

One of them is missing on that first Easter Sunday – Thomas. But when the disciples come together again eight days later, that is the next Sunday, today, Thomas is with them. Stubborn realist that he is he cannot yet accept the testimony of the others that they have seen the Lord. Yet his doubt becomes the doorway to faith. Thomas admitted that he did not believe, and he gave his conditions for changing his mind. But when the risen Jesus appears and calls him by his name, just as he did on Easter morning with Mary Magdalene, Thomas has no more doubts, he needs no further convincing. He can only declare in wonder: 'My Lord and my God!' The one absolutely unequivocal statement of the divinity of Jesus in the whole Gospel comes from the mouth of 'doubting Thomas.' From the first Easter onwards, Jesus became central to the disciples' understanding and worship of God.

In both scenes of our Gospel reading today, it is the first day of the week, in other words, Sunday. The resurrection was first experienced on this day and led in due course to Sunday becoming the new holy day of the Christians, in addition initially to the Jewish Saturday Sabbath. And from that time onwards and still today, Sunday, the day of resurrection, is the most special day that Christians come together to meet with the risen Lord. In the Eucharist we come to hear, to see, to touch and to be nourished by Jesus in the way that he has given for us until the new age on earth that dawned with him comes to an end. We may not see Jesus as Thomas and the other disciples saw him in those first heady days of the first Easter. But sight is also about seeing with the eyes of faith. And as Jesus said, if we have faith that he is risen we are as blessed as his first disciples were.

As we come together as his community we have a share in the disciples' experience of communion with the risen Lord. And we receive continuing strength and motivation to live as his disciples, his witnesses in the world. The

words from our second reading from the first letter of John become ours also to tell: 'We declare to you what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands – concerning the word of life – this life was revealed, and we have seen it and testify to it, and declare to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was revealed to us – we declare to you what we have seen and heard so that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.'

We won't necessarily or always go out and say such words to others, but the important thing is that we go out in the confidence which those words communicate, and actually live by them. We are urged to walk in the light of Christ that we have received.

Our first reading from the Acts of the Apostles highlights how the apostles' testimony to the resurrection of Jesus was expressed most powerfully by the way they lived. Centred on their gatherings for prayer and the breaking of bread, their practice of holiness committed them to a common life of fellowship, of sharing their resources and of loving service to those in need. The life of the Church became participation in the life of God. It continued the work of Jesus.

So in our readings today, the meaning and mission of the Church is set out for us. We are given a glimpse of what we signed up for when we were baptized. Last Sunday we had an opportunity to renew our baptismal promises. When we were baptized we were 'Christ-ened,' made one with Christ, with all the potential and purpose of making Christ known to the world through our common life as the Christian community and in our own individual witness and service.

Of course, we don't always get it right, we don't always measure up. We are individually and together a work in progress. The second reading from first John also reminds us of this and calls us to be real and to reject pride. He says, 'If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.' Our life loses its 'F' – it becomes a lie. But if we acknowledge and repent of our sins God will forgive and set us free from them. To know that we often mess up and fall short is a spiritual strength. It gives us humility, helps us to know our real self rather than the false self. It enables us to get up and walk again on the right path. God's loving mercy and compassion provides us not with a safety net but a springboard to raise us up again, to walk in the light that we have already beheld, the light of the risen Christ.

To be Christ to others is the Christian calling. It ensures that Christ is still visible and active in the world through his disciples, his followers. Today, in this Eucharist let us rejoice with the apostles, the first disciples, as with them we too meet the risen Lord. And let us joyfully recommit ourselves to the life and mission we share with them.

*A few moments of silent reflection are recommended.*

**The Profession of Faith**, either the following or one of the traditional creeds:

*We believe in God the Father from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named.*

*We believe in God the Son, who lives in our hearts through faith, and fills us with his love.*

*We believe in God the Holy Spirit, who strengthens us with power from on high.*

*We believe in one God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.*

### **Prayers of Intercession**

Faithful God, we praise you for the resurrection of your Son Jesus Christ from the dead. Shed his glorious light on all Christian people that we may live as those who believe in the triumph of the cross.

Almighty God we ask you to be a real and living presence in your church throughout the world. May our churches of St. Francis, through its preaching and works of love continue to testify to our Lord's resurrection. Wherever we are lacking in faith and courage strengthen us with your Spirit. We ask for your blessing on our Bishops Robert and David, Archdeacon David and Area Dean Medhat. We pray for our priest John; may he have strength and wisdom in his ministry.

**Lord, in your Mercy..... Hear our Prayer.**

Merciful God we pray for peace in our troubled world. Wherever nations are at war and people are we pray for true reconciliation. Give Grace and wisdom to all governments that they may be dedicated to seeking peace and health for their people. Protect all Christian people in the nations of the world, and help them to influence their countries for the good of all.

**Lord, in your Mercy..... Hear our Prayer**

Father God we pray for all families whose homes are disrupted by anger and bitterness and where relationships are breaking up. We thank you for the gift of your Son, our Saviour, who walks with us on our life's journey and, as he gladdened the hearts of his friends when they saw him raised from the dead, may he travel alongside all who are struggling with their family life.

**Lord, in your Mercy.....Hear our Prayer.**

Loving God comfort the sick and suffering with your living presence. Heal and strengthen weak bodies, calm confused minds and reassure the lonely with your company. In a moment of silence we raise before you those we know with particular needs of healing including Margaret Rainton, Petrina Thompson and Carol Hart.....

We ask your blessing on all who work in health and emergency services; may they be kept safe and well.

**Lord, in your Mercy.....Hear our Prayer**

We pray for Queen Elizabeth and the British Royal Family at this time of their bereavement, and for all who mourn the passing of Prince Philip throughout the world.

God of our lives, we give thanks for the life of Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh; for his devotion to Her Majesty the Queen, for his dedication to global community and God's creation, and for his long life of loyal service. We entrust him now to your love and mercy, through our Redeemer, Jesus Christ. Amen.

We remember too all others who have died in the hope of the resurrection. Unite us with them in your undying love. Help us to always remember that death could not hold your Son Jesus Christ and that new life for him means new life already for those who follow Him.

**Lord, in your Mercy..... Hear our Prayer.**

Gracious God, your Son Jesus Christ, stands among us, and we have seen the marks of your saving love. Breathe on us with the power of your Holy Spirit and send us out to share the peace of Christ with all who may cross our paths in the weeks ahead.

**Merciful Father, accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen.**

As part of a community of faith and love made one heart and soul by the Spirit, we can pray to the Father of all the prayer of Jesus our Lord:

**Our Father.....**

*You may wish to offer this or an alternative prayer of spiritual communion, and/or in silence just sit in the peace of the ever-present Lord for a while.*

Soul of Christ, be my sanctification,  
body of Christ, be my salvation,  
blood of Christ, fill all my veins,  
water from Christ's side, wash out my stains.  
Passion of Christ, my comfort be.  
O good Jesus, listen to me:  
In your wounds I fain would hide,  
never to be parted from your side.  
Guide me when the foe assails me,  
call me when my life shall fail me,  
bid me come to you above,  
with your saints to dwell in your love  
for ever and ever. Amen.

### **Concluding Prayer**

Lord God our Father, through our Saviour Jesus Christ you have assured your children of eternal life and in baptism have made us one with him: deliver us from the death of sin and raise us to new life in your love, in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

### **Blessing**

The God of peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the eternal covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be with you, and with those you love and pray for, today and always. Amen.

Go in the peace of Christ. Alleluia, alleluia!  
Thanks be to God. Alleluia, alleluia!