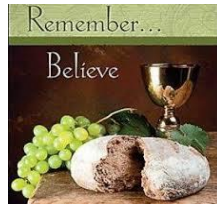


Service for The Second Sunday of Easter (Low Sunday)



Collect

Almighty Father, you have given your only Son to die for our sins, and to rise again for our justification: grant us so to put away the leaven of malice and wickedness that we may always serve you in pureness of living and truth; through Jesus Christ our Lord who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit one God now and for ever. Amen

Readings for the Day

Acts 2. 14a, 22-32; Psalm 16; 1 Peter 1, 3-9

Gospel : John 20, 19-31 : Jesus appears to his disciples

¹⁹ On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you!' ²⁰ After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.

²¹ Again Jesus said, 'Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.' ²² And with that he breathed on them and said, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³ If you forgive anyone's sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.'

²⁴ Now Thomas (also known as Didymus^[a]), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. ²⁵ So the other disciples told him, 'We have seen the Lord!'

But he said to them, 'Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.'

²⁶ A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you!' ²⁷ Then he said to Thomas, 'Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.'

²⁸ Thomas said to him, 'My Lord and my God!'

²⁹ Then Jesus told him, 'Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.'

³⁰ Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. ³¹ But these are written that you may believe^[b] that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.



Homily : Reflections on the gospel

If I were to give the names of certain disciples and ask you to write down the first word that comes into your mind, it is unlikely you would all come up with the same words. For example , if I were to mention the name of Judas many of you would write down the word "the betrayer" . If I were to mention Simon Peter, perhaps some of you would write down the words "the impetuous one"? But when I mention Thomas, there is little question about the word almost everyone would write down. It would be the word doubt. Indeed, so closely have we associated Thomas with this word, that we have coined a phrase to describe him: "Doubting Thomas."

In the first three gospels we are told absolutely nothing at all about Thomas. It is in John's Gospel that he emerges as a distinct personality, but even then there are only 155 words about him. There is not a lot about this disciple in the Bible, but what there is , is really important.

When Jesus turned his face toward Jerusalem the disciples thought that it would be certain death for all of them. Surprisingly, it was Thomas who said: "then let us go so that we may die with him". It was a courageous statement, yet we don't remember him for that. We also fail to notice that in this story of Thomas' doubt, we have the one place in all the Gospels where the Divinity of Christ is bluntly and unequivocally stated. The story that gives Thomas his infamous nickname, is the same story that has Thomas making a confession of faith?

His confession needs looking at: “My Lord, and my God.” Not teacher; not Lord; not Messiah. But God! It is the only place where Jesus is called God without qualification of any kind. It is uttered with conviction as if Thomas was simply recognizing a fact. **You are my Lord and my God!** These are certainly not the words of a doubter.

The label that poor Thomas has become known by is an unfair one. The Gospel records his remarkable journey of change. Thomas moves from discouragement, disbelief, a wounded heart, an outcry against the other disciples to a confession of faith in the living Jesus—“My Lord and my God!”.

There is nothing wrong with honest doubt and it is something that many devout and devoted Christians will describe. Some struggle with hard questions, hard circumstances, but want to believe. The honest doubter refuses answers that are too easy and which do not recognize the importance of the questions.

Thomas moves ahead when it is time for him to do so; for him it was eight days after the other disciples see the risen Lord. Jesus appears among the disciples a second time, radiantly alive, and this time Thomas is present. Jesus invites Thomas to satisfy his need for proof, to examine the scars and to believe. There’s no evidence that Thomas touches the scars; he may or may not have done so. But what is certainly clear is that he moves ahead in faith.

Jesus never criticises his hesitancy and his demand for proof. The story related in John about Thomas, paradoxically, helps me with my faith. It tells me not to be ashamed of the questions I often ask on my spiritual journey. Thank you Thomas, and thank you Jesus for your empathic response to him. Amen

Prayers

Keep us , Good Lord, under the wing of your love in this time of uncertainty and distress. Sustain and support the fearful and be with those whose mood is low.

Lord Jesus, you taught us to love our neighbours and to care for those in need, as if we were caring for you. In this time of anxiety when we cannot physically be with people in the way we would wish, give us the wisdom to assure the isolated of our love, and that you are ever present in all our lives.

God of compassion be close to those who are ill, afraid or in isolation. In their loneliness be their consolation, in their anxiety be their hope, in their darkness be their light. We ask you to comfort and heal them. Through Jesus our Lord. Amen

Gracious God, give skill, and resilience to all who are caring for the sick and wisdom to those searching for a cure. Strengthen them with your Spirit that through their work, many will be restored to health. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Finally O Lord, we give you thanks for the dedication of all those known to us who are working so hard in our community to ensure that facilities are available and that resources are brought to those who in need. We are truly thankful that there is so much love and commitment within this our community of Shellrock. Amen

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, For ever and ever Amen

Blessing

The Lord bless us and preserve us from all evil and keep us in eternal life

Amen