

Sat. 10<sup>th</sup> April

Mark 16: 9-15

Having risen in the morning on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary of Magdala from whom he had cast out seven devils. She then went to those who had been his companions, and who were mourning and in tears, and told them. But they did not believe her when they heard her say that he was alive and that she had seen him. After this, he showed himself under another form to two of them as they were on their way into the country. These went back and told the others, who did not believe them either. Lastly, he showed himself to the Eleven themselves while they were at table. He reproached them for their incredulity and obstinacy, because they had refused to believe those who had seen him after he had risen. And he said to them, 'Go out to the whole world; proclaim the gospel to all creation.'

It seems strange that though Jesus had spoken of his rising from death many times, his apostles did not believe it, even when they heard from eyewitnesses. But Jesus' message was a truly radical one; it was beyond comprehension and imagination! Even today, we sometimes struggle to grasp the truth of the resurrection.

After his resurrection, Jesus chooses to appear first to Mary of Magdala and 2 others instead of his closest companions. Sometimes, God's message to us also comes through other people around us. The apostles were too engrossed in their fear and sadness to notice the excitement and hope that filled the ones who had seen Christ alive. Let us not fall into the same error and miss Jesus' message to us.

We are sent to preach Jesus' love and friendship to all people. His salvation is offered to all!

*Lord, thank you for coming to me again and again, even though I am often unbelieving or just too busy to hear you.*

*Dear Jesus, help me make time to listen to you today!*

### Divine Mercy Sunday

Sun. 11th April

John 20: 19-31

In the evening of that same day, the first day of the week, the doors were closed in the room where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews. Jesus came and stood among them. He said to them, 'Peace be with you,' and, after saying this, he showed them his hands and his side. The disciples were filled with joy at seeing the Lord, and he said to them again, 'Peace be with you. 'As the Father sent me, so am I sending you.' After saying this he breathed on them and said: Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone's sins, they are forgiven; if you retain anyone's sins, they are retained. Thomas, called the Twin, who was 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 answered, 'Unless I can see the holes that the nails made in his hands and can put my finger into the holes they made, and unless I can put my hand into his side, I refuse to believe.' Eight days later the disciples were in the house again and Thomas was with them. The doors were closed, but Jesus came in and stood among them. 'Peace be with you,' he said. Then he spoke to Thomas, 'Put your finger here; look, here are my hands. Give me your hand; put it into my side. Do not be unbelieving any more but believe.' Thomas replied, 'My Lord and my God!' Jesus said to him: You believe because you can see me. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe.

Why is the reading of "doubting Thomas" chosen for today? After the arrest of Jesus, his disciples were hiding in fear from the authorities, ashamed of their fear and the betrayal of their beloved teacher. Yet Jesus comes to them after his resurrection, to give them peace, to encourage them, and to commission them with his own life mission.

Despite their cowardice, Jesus did not condemn his disciples! He understood their fears, and came to the give them the Holy Spirit to unite and strengthen them. This is Jesus' mercy to us; he comes to us after we betray him to offer us peace and strength. Jesus does not despise our weakness, but tells us he still trusts and loves us!

Let us not remain in shame of our failings or fear of the world. Rather, let us open our hearts to be touched by the forgiving and generous love of Jesus so that we can bring his message to all peoples.

*Thank you Jesus, for showing me the reason to rejoice. I am forgiven, and even entrusted with your mission. Thank you Lord, for loving me so much.*

Mon. 12th April

Acts 4: 23-31

As soon as they were released they went to the community and told them everything the chief priests and elders had said to them. When they heard it they lifted up their voice to God with one heart. 'Master,' they prayed, 'it is you who made sky and earth and sea, and everything in them; it is you who said through the Holy Spirit and speaking through our ancestor David, your servant: Why this uproar among the nations, this impotent muttering of the peoples? Kings on earth take up position, princes plot together against the Lord and his Anointed. 'This is what has come true: in this very city Herod and Pontius Pilate plotted together with the gentile nations and the peoples of Israel, against your holy servant Jesus whom you anointed, to bring about the very thing that you in your strength and your wisdom had predetermined should happen. And now,

Lord, take note of their threats and help your servants to proclaim your message with all fearlessness, by stretching out your hand to heal and to work miracles and marvels through the name of your holy servant Jesus.' As they prayed, the house where they were assembled rocked. From this time they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to proclaim the word of God fearlessly.

What a transformation had come over Jesus' disciples! Before they encountered the Risen Lord, their response to external situations was guided by their human wisdom. They ran and hid when hunted and persecuted by the authorities. But after meeting the resurrected Christ, they allowed God's wisdom to guide them. They found the courage to confront threats to their lives fearlessly, faithfully carrying out their mission of witnessing for Jesus.

How about us? What do we depend on to guide our daily decisions? Are we willing to allow God to fill us with zeal for his people, and to give us courage to go against the ways of the world? Like the early disciples, we will face persecution and resistance. But from their lives, we know there will be deep joy in living in friendship with Jesus.

What do we choose today?

*Dear Jesus, I am not too busy to listen to you. I want to be filled with your love and joy and peace, so that I can live as you teach me to.*

Tues 13<sup>th</sup> April

Acts 4: 32-37

The whole group of believers was united, heart and soul; no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, as everything they owned was held in common. The apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus with great power, and they were all accorded great respect. None of their members was ever in want, as all those who owned land or houses would sell them, and bring the money from the sale of them, to present it to the apostles; it was then distributed to any who might be in need. There was a Levite of Cypriot origin called Joseph whom the apostles surnamed Barnabas (which means 'son of encouragement'). He owned a piece of land and he sold it and brought the money and presented it to the apostles.

The way of the early disciples, united in heart and soul, sharing all their possessions, seems so unrealistic in our world. People are individualistic, materialistic and greedy in the real world... really?

We look at the religious communities living among us today, sharing their possessions with one another and giving their

time and effort to the same mission. Isn't this way of life similar to that of the early Christian communities?

So it is possible, then, to live like them, even in our world today! But this can only be possible if, like them, our hearts and minds are united by the love of Jesus. Jesus' love for us, and for all people, helps us look beyond our desires, our ambitions, our dreams. In exchange, we receive the dream of Jesus – to win all men with His love, so that we can all live in joy, harmony and union with Him.

*Dear Jesus, help me to entrust all my worldly pursuits and desires to you. Guide me to share generously all my resources with those in need, and to keep my sight focused on building up your kingdom on earth.*

**Wed. 14th April**

**John 3: 16-21**

For this is how God loved the world: he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. For God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but so that through him the world might be saved. No one who believes in him will be judged; but whoever does not believe is judged already, because that person does not believe in the Name of God's only Son. And the judgement is this: though the light has come into the world people have preferred darkness to the light because their deeds were evil. And indeed, everybody who does wrong hates the light and avoids it, to prevent his actions from being shown up; but whoever does the truth comes out into the light, so that what he is doing may plainly appear as done in God.'

God gives us Jesus so that we can share in his eternal life, not to condemn us to eternal death. This is difficult for so many to accept, because God's gift to us is so great, and also so undeserved.

We are used to working hard to earn and achieve what we want. In God's world, He freely gives us what we need in order to find true joy, peace, fulfilment... Life. He is not the judge who counts our good deeds against our failings. He is our Father who is eager for us to live life to the full.

In prayer, we can let down our defences and ask God to open our eyes to know Him – our Creator who loves us beyond our imagination and comprehension. Let us allow Him to win us over with His love, to lead us into His light, to guide us to live in His likeness.

*Lord Jesus, you have come to save my life from emptiness, unhappiness and hopelessness.*

**Thurs. 15th April**

**Acts 5: 27-33**

When they had brought them in to face the Sanhedrin, the high priest demanded an explanation. 'We gave you a strong warning', he said, 'not to preach in this name,

and what have you done? You have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and seem determined to fix the guilt for this man's death on us.' In reply Peter and the apostles said, 'Obedience to God comes before obedience to men; it was the God of our ancestors who raised up Jesus, whom you executed by hanging on a tree. By his own right hand God has now raised him up to be leader and Saviour, to give repentance and forgiveness of sins through him to Israel. We are witnesses to this, we and the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey him.' This so infuriated them that they wanted to put them to death.



*'Obedience to God comes before obedience to men...'*

Many people claim to be living in obedience to God's will. In His name, they carry out acts of terror, mislead the faithful or live double lives of external piety while secretly serving their personal desires. Indeed, this defense of Peter is easily distorted by people. To prevent that, let us take time today to know God, to know His will for us, so that we can truly obey His will and no other.

We can take the same defense when confronted by societal pressures to conform to its values. Before we agree to take on more debt so we can have a bigger car, a longer holiday, or a more perfect body, or to take on a better position at work that allows us faster promotions, etc. Let us consider the true cost of our choice. Will it take our time, our joy, our attention away from the people we love? Sure, our work and recreation contribute to our quality of life. But let us not get carried away by false promises but hold fast to the people and values we truly care about.

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## Prayer for Living

**Fri. 9<sup>th</sup> April**

**Acts 4: 1-12**

While they were still talking to the people the priests came up to them, accompanied by the captain of the Temple and the Sadducees. They were extremely annoyed at their teaching the people the resurrection from the dead by proclaiming the resurrection of Jesus. They arrested them... and began to interrogate them, 'By what power, and by whose name have you men done this?' Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, addressed them, 'Rulers of the people, and elders... you must know, all of you, and the whole people of Israel, that it is by the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, whom you crucified, and God raised from the dead, by this name and by no other that this man stands before you cured. This is the stone which you, the builders, rejected but which has become the cornerstone. Only in him is there salvation; for of all the names in the world given to men, this is the only one by which we can be saved.'

Is this the same Peter who denied Jesus and hid in fear of the Pharisees and scribes when they arrested Jesus? How did he become transformed so completely that he was fearlessly proclaiming salvation through Jesus' death and resurrection in front of the church elders?

Peter had encountered the Risen Christ! He had seen and touched and eaten with Jesus who rose from death. He believes in the resurrection from death; nothing is impossible for God! And what empowers Peter to speak with zeal and boldness was the mercy of God. Through Jesus' coming to them after rising, his offer of peace and his Holy Spirit, the disciples realised that Jesus did not condemn them for abandoning him in his moment of need.

Jesus understands human failings – our fears, our pride, our greed, etc. He does not condemn, but offers us his love to help us overcome them. Through Jesus' forgiving love, Peter overcame his cowardice and pride. Filled with love, he was eager to help all people come to know Jesus too.

Our risen Lord comes to us today, to look us in the eyes and asks us, "Do you love me? Give me your weakness and shame. Let me fill you, rather, with my love and forgiveness."

*Lord transform me into a true disciple of Love!*