

Second Sunday of Easter

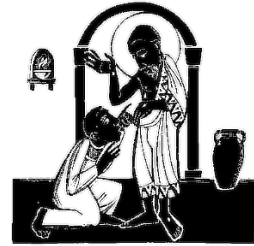
[Reading I: Acts 4:32-35](#)

[Responsorial Psalm 118:2-4, 13-15, 22-24](#)

[Reading II: 1 John 5:1-6](#) [Gospel: John 20:19-31](#)

Readings may be found on the US Bishop's website:

<https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/040724.cfm>



The Cycle B Easter season readings have selections from the Acts of the Apostles, the First Letter of John, and the Gospel of John except for the Third Sunday and Ascension Sunday. Passages from the Acts of the Apostles replace selections from the Old Testament during the Easter Season and describe God's work in the first Christian communities.

The selection from the Acts of the Apostles offers an image of the Christian life that results from the resurrection of Christ. The new life was not simply a personal experience but had a social and communal impact. This passage highlights two key aspects of the early Christian community.

There is a shared life. Christ has shared life with us, and so we are called to share life with one another. As children of God, we are stewards, not owners of all that God has given us. Our use of physical property can be an expression of solidarity by which we show our concern for all other Body of Christ members. For early Christians, property was held in common. Individual rights were limited based on the needs of the whole community. This probably grew from the experience that many of the community had migrated from Galilee to Jerusalem. They needed one another to survive in the big city. They identified as disciples who were there for each other. Paul expressed this in the image of the Body of Christ. The whole community was a body that needed all the other parts. This is far from our experience today.

Family life is one real experience of this practice for most people. Parents sacrifice their needs and wants to offer their children the opportunity to live a full and meaningful life. Parents care for children at all hours of the day and night. They drive them places and wait for them to finish activities. They provide food, clothing, and medical care for them. This is a small-scale example of what the early Christians strove to do for each other.

While the sharing of goods and resources did not become law within the church, this ideal continues to inspire the church, particularly in monasticism and later religious orders. They practice the holding of goods in common for the good of all members of the community. The community owns things while individuals own nothing personally. Goods are shared as needed.

There is also the practice of recognizing other Christians' needs and sending people and money to assist them. Since the fall of the Soviet Union, American Catholics have annually collected money to help rebuild churches and schools that had been destroyed. Churches regularly assist other churches following earthquakes, tornadoes, or other disasters for we see ourselves as part of a larger body of believers who have responsibility for one another.

This stewardship of goods also reflects a profound respect for each person. The Christian community is composed of women and men, girls and boys who have dignity as children of God and our sisters and brothers. The example of the early Christians challenges us to see people and not groups divided by race, nationality, economic status, or education. Everyone belongs because God created everyone.

The second focus of the early community was on the preaching of the Apostles, particularly on the Resurrection of Jesus. The resurrection is the sign that God does overcome all evil, and it serves as our hope that God will complete the work that has been started in us.

The second reading is from the First Letter of St John. It was written to a particular group of Christians, who are not identified, and who are working through various contradictory teachings. It seeks to offer guidance on the authentic Christian understanding of life in Christ. The Johannine style is more cyclical than linear in presenting ideas. One idea will be offered, and something will spin-off, and then one will be taken back to the starting point. Words have a particular meaning in Johannine writings. Faith is not about doctrine as much as it is about a trusting reliance upon God. "World" is about the unbelieving human society, not God's gift of creation.

Believing (committing, entrusting yourself) that Jesus is the Christ (Messiah) and the one begotten (not created) (one who proceeds from the Father) is what makes one a child of God. It is not deeds or knowledge but entrusting oneself to God is the central act of a Christian. In this, one conquers the World (the unbelieving human society that lacks direction). Jesus showed that he was the one from God by coming amongst us in both water (baptism and his ministry) and blood (his death and resurrection). We, too, will conquer the world not only by our lives but by suffering out of love and surrendering to God.

As followers, we are called to live as Jesus lived (following the commandments). In the Johannine school, the central command is to love as God loved us, for God is love. Jesus loved everyone and called us to love our enemies, care for those in need, and be willing to lay down our lives for the good of others. All our expressions of commandments flow from this primordial command.

The Gospel recounts Jesus' appearance to the disciples on Easter night when he conveyed the Holy Spirit to them and authorized them to forgive sins. (This Sunday is also referred to as Divine Mercy Sunday because of the commission to forgive sins.) The Gospel also presents Jesus appearing a second time to the apostles a week later, and this time Thomas is present. (This Sunday also has been called Doubting Thomas Sunday.)

The forgiveness of sins is also another unique aspect of Christianity. Other traditions have prescribed activities or rituals that will earn forgiveness for a person. Christianity sees forgiveness as a gift. It is God's gift to us that cannot be achieved. It is a gift, and all we need to do is accept it. Through Christ's words to the apostles, the Church is empowered to offer this gift to everyone who desires it. God's great mercy is unlimited.

In the same way, all disciples of Jesus should show the same forgiveness that has been shown to them. Jesus taught disciples to do this in the Sermon on the Mount and the Lord's Prayer. "Forgive us as we forgive those who have trespassed against us.

Thomas's desire to see Christ and place his fingers in the nail marks raises the issue that people have asked in every age. Unless I can see, I will not believe it. But even seeing does not always produce faith. The Jewish leaders who rejected the miracle of the man born blind saw someone who was blind and could now see, but that did not bring them to faith. Thomas comes to faith when Jesus addresses him. The Word of God came into his mind and heart, and he believed.

We, too, are called to believe without seeing. We have the disciples' witness and need to look to our experience in the community of the faithful. Is the Lord in our midst?

If so, our words and deeds should give witness to him so that others may come to believe.

The purpose of the Gospels is presented in the concluding lines: "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." The scriptures are offered that we may come to faith and have life.

Themes:

Christian Identity
Forgiveness

Christian Community
Faith

Reflection Questions:

Where have you encountered the Risen Lord?

Do you view yourself more as a steward or owner of property?

What is faith for you? How is it expressed in your life.?

What implications are there in being a child of God?

How have you experienced forgiveness in your life? (Recall some experiences and then think about how God always wants to forgive you.)

What challenges do you face in forgiving others?

How do the scriptures help you to believe and live more fully for Christ?

Prayer Suggestions:

For the Church: that, through the gift of the Spirit, we recognize God's presence with us and profess with Thomas, "My Lord and My God"

For a renewal of our faith communities: that, like the early church, we may see the needs of others as our needs and open our hearts and resources to assist them

For a blossoming of faith: that God will enrich our faith so that we may be victors over the lies, illusions, and false promises that our society glorifies

For all who are in need, particularly children orphaned by war, those recovering from natural disasters, those fleeing violence, those in famine, and those seeking shelter and safety: that God will guide them and open our hearts to their cries

For the grace of continual conversion: that God will continue to transform us and help us to be instruments of forgiveness and reconciliation in our families and workplaces