

## ***John 20:19-31***

On the evening of that first day of the week, when the doors were locked, where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, “Peace be with you.” When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side. 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.” And when He had said this, He breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained.”

Thomas, called Didymus, 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 said to them, “Unless I see the mark of the nails in His hands and put My finger into the nail marks and put My hand into His side, I will not believe,” Now a week later His disciples were again inside and Thomas was with them. Jesus came, although the doors were locked, and stood in their midst and said, “Peace be with you.” Then He said to Thomas, “Put your finger here and see My hands, and bring your hand and put it into My side, and do not be unbelieving, but believe,” Thomas answered and said to Him, “My Lord and my God!” Jesus said to him, “Have you come to believe because you have seen Me? Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed.”

Now, Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples that are not written in this book. But these are written that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through this belief you may have life in His name.

***The Gospel of the Lord***

## *Reflection Questions*

- 1) **The Context:** This chapter serves as a nice “book end” for the entire book. In the first Chapter, the gospel writer John makes Christ’s pre-eminence, pre-existence and equality with God very clear when he states, “In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God.” (Jn 1:1-3a). In this passage, once Thomas touches the wounds, he exclaims, “My Lord and my God”, a powerful faith statement of Jesus’ divinity. The theme of Christ’s Divinity and John’s desire that we would believe in that is a theme that we find throughout John’s gospel. If we take some time to compare this passage with John chapter 14:18-19, 26-27, we notice that Jesus is already prepared the disciples for His departure by offering them His Peace.
- 2) The “first day of the week” referred to here is the resurrection day, Easter Sunday evening. The disciples are behind locked doors because they are afraid of the Jews, still recovering from the trauma of the crucifixion and probably wondering if the same will happen to them. In what ways have we found ourselves “hiding behind locked doors” and becoming paralyzed by our fear, just at the moments when Jesus wants us to witness and to be a part of something beautiful, powerful and life-giving?
- 3) The powerful symbol of the locked doors on the one hand reminds us of the cost of discipleship (e.g. protecting ones self from those who would like to use violence to stop the mission of Christ). The locked doors are a sign of both the disciples’ fear but a symbol of the fact that nothing can keep the Risen Christ bound from showing people the reality of the resurrection; not the tomb nor any other physical barrier. In what way has Jesus demonstrated to you in your own life that He is bigger than any, ‘tomb’, ‘barrier’ or personal problem you could ever face?
- 4) The first thing that Jesus tells them as He stands among them, “Peace be with you.” The Greek word for ‘peace’ is used here, but the concept is more that of the Jewish “Shalom” which is much greater than the absence of conflict. The “Shalom” that Jesus offers is an outpouring of the wholeness that only God can give. In Jewish thought, ‘peace’ and ‘joy’ were signs that the eschatological period of God’s intervention had begun. As Christians, we call this the coming of the Kingdom. In what ways is Peace a sign that the victorious reality of God’s Kingdom is around us? Why would Jesus bequeath to them Peace, first and foremost? In what ways is Peace a foundational gift of the Holy Spirit, helping to

heal our fears and opening us up to the transformative power of God's Victorious Love in our midst?

- 5) Jesus offers the disciples His Peace a second time and then tells them that as God has sent Him, so now Jesus sends them.(see Jesus' prayer to the Father about His disciples in John 17:18). Jesus comes into the world with God's authority and now sends His disciples forth with His authority. In what ways have you experienced this on your own road of discipleship? Take a moment to imagine Jesus saying to you, "Peace be with you, (your name), as the Father has sent Me, so I send you." What is your reaction to that call? In what way is His Peace an essential piece of equipment for the call to discipleship?
- 6) Jesus is sending His disciples into the world to minister in His name. He is not unaware of darkness, strife and evil in the world to which they are sent, so He equips them by breathing upon them the Holy Spirit. How has the Holy Spirit helped you, sustained you and encouraged you in your mission of discipleship? In what ways have you been called to "fill yourself" with the Holy Spirit again and again so that He may live in and through you as a witness to the world?
- 7) In verse 23, we see Jesus giving them the power to forgive or retain sin (reminiscent of Matt. 16:19). For the gospel writer, John, sin is more of a theological failing than a moral one. For John, sin is the failure to see and accept the Truth that is before our very eyes (physical and spiritual eyesight). In this case, the Truth is that Jesus who really died is now resurrected in their midst demonstrating His power over sin, evil and death. If we believe this Truth, we will be set free by this Truth. In what new ways are we being called to believe in the reality of the resurrection so that we may be set free by that Truth and set others free through that Truth as well? How do we experience His resurrection as having power over sin, evil and death in our own lives?
- 8) Verse 25b describes Thomas' demand to see the physical evidence of the resurrection before he believes. This comment could easily be taken as arrogant or ignorant (from our 20/20 hindsight perspective). Throughout history, the apostle Thomas, has gotten a 'bad rap' because he asks a very practical question. (a curiosity that others probably shared but did not dare speak). He is honest about his weak faith and his need to see some physical evidence. Jesus graciously responds to the seemingly obnoxious request by inviting Thomas to plunge his finger into His hand and side. We are thankful for this account because there are times when we share Thomas'

‘need’ for some kind of ‘concrete evidence’ and we need to know that Jesus is gracious enough to meet us where we are at. But at the same time, Jesus does not hesitate to tell us that “blessed are those who have not seen but believe.” We can always ask Jesus for the grace of increased faith. How might Jesus be calling us to do that this Easter Season?

- 9) The result of Christ’s graciousness with Thomas is one of the most profound Christological statements we have in the gospels, “My Lord and My God!” Thomas equates Jesus with God, which is what the Gospel writer desires that we all believe. How is your life different because you believe that Jesus is God? How are we each called to proclaim that reality with our lips and our lives? How do you experience Jesus in His gentle willingness to meet you where you are at, but still aware of His desire to bring you to the next place? How does Christ call us to approach others in the same manner as we disciple them in His name?
- 10) Verse 31 tells us that these events are recorded so that we might come to believe and have life in His name. There is a direct correlation between the life of the Spirit in us and our belief (e.g. willingness to acknowledge the power of His Spirit within us and all around us—see Romans 1:6, 4:1-3 and 1 Corinthians 1:21). What is your experience of the dynamic between the life of the Spirit in our lives and our openness to believing?
- 11) Jesus offers His Peace *three* times in this passage. It is the first thing that He ‘bequeaths’ to His disciples as part of their inheritance in Him. Jesus continues to ‘bequeath’ His Peace to us as His disciples as part of our inheritance in Him. In what ways is Christ’s gift of Peace one of the most foundational gifts He could offer us (besides His Presence and His Love) for our mission in Him? How does His Peace in a very particular way equip us for the mission that He has for us? How is this passage in particular a very fitting passage for Divine Mercy Sunday? (e.g. Christ’s mercy with Thomas and His merciful outreach to all who had abandoned Him just a few days earlier and His mercy with us).