

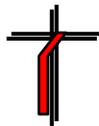
*Reflecting on the Sunday Readings*

***Without Seeing – We Believe***

**2C Easter, 27-28 April 2019**

**Acts 5:12-16 Rev 1:9-11a, 12-13, 17-19, John 20:19-31**

*Rev. Mr. Peter B. Swan*



The focus of last week's celebration of Easter was on Jesus' rising from the dead and his gift of new, eternal life. This week the focus is on those who receive this gift of eternal life. This week, the Church focuses on us. You and I!!!

*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—Shalom, Peace be with you.*

We find ourselves still on the day on which Mary of Magdala ran to the tomb before sun-up to discover the rock rolled away from the entrance of the tomb---Sunday. This is the same day that Peter and John ran to the tomb to discover the undisturbed burial cloths---but no body, no Jesus ---Sunday. It is the same day that the risen Lord was thought to be a gardener by Mary of Magdala; but discloses who he is by the single exclamation—**Mary!** --- Still Sunday. It has been quite a day for some of the followers of Jesus—and it is only going to get more spectacular!

The disciples are in the upper room. The very same place that they ate the Last Supper with Jesus when he said, "**This is my Body. This is my Blood which is given for you.**" The doors are locked for fear of the Jews. Perhaps what is needed here, more than anything is **Shalom**—the harmonious balance of health, prosperity, freedom and security. At this particular moment, the disciples feared for their security and for their freedom—which in turn threatens their health and prosperity. If Shalom is an oasis, then one could say that the disciples are currently in the middle of a vast barren desert. Their lives were empty.

We hear Jesus say three times, "**Peace be with you.**" The apostles were filled with joy when they saw the Risen Christ, but on a very human level they were trembling. Not only because Jesus had returned from the dead. No, they had a deeper reason to fear. Think about it. Just three days earlier they had abandoned

Jesus, let him down at a time he needed them most. All of us know how upset we get when someone promises to be there for us, then disappears when things get rough. The apostles had good reason to fear. Jesus knows how his friends feel. He knows why they are hiding behind locked doors. He wants to give them Shalom, therefore, The Word greets them with the word that the disciples long to hear—Shalom! -- Peace be with you!

Jesus wants his disciples to see that his bodily resurrection is a reality so the first thing he does is show them his pierced hands and side—and they rejoiced. Jesus then tells them, ***“As the Father has sent me, so I send you.”*** Just as the disciples needed Jesus in their time of fear, Jesus also needs the disciples to be his instruments of love and peace. Just as the Father sent the Son, the Son now sends His disciples.

Then 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.”*** The forgiveness of sin was very costly for Jesus. It should be costly for us also. It demands something from us, it demands true contrition.

One of the Twelve, Thomas, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples said to him—“We have seen the Lord.” But Thomas did not believe them. Does Thomas sincerely think that these ten men—his close friends—have it all wrong? Does he think that they are playing a practical joke? Or, is the anger from feeling left out of this intimate moment with Jesus, paralyzing Thomas with pride, anger and resentment? That would be my vote. On this day Mary of Magdala has her moment with Jesus. On this day all of the disciples except Judas and Thomas have their moments with Jesus. However, all Thomas gets is an entrance into a room filled with beaming, rejoicing disciples who can not wait to tell him that the Lord appeared to them and breathed on them the Holy Spirit

giving them the authority to forgive and retain sins. I think our Thomas was filled with anger and resentment.

Now a week later the disciples were again inside and Thomas was with them. Jesus came, stood in their midst and said, ***“Shalom, Peace be with you”***. Then he spoke directly to Thomas. We all have seen many images of Thomas probing the wounds of Jesus, however, the text never clarifies what actions Thomas took. Perhaps he did not see the need to move a muscle other than his tongue to proclaim, **“My Lord and My God!”**

We too are like Thomas and we all suffer from pride and resentment along our spiritual journeys. At times we are envious and paralyzed by what others have --- spiritually. Anger surfaces when we ask the question--- Why them and not me? More time is spent feeling envious than is spent feeling grateful for what one has spiritually. In a few moments, we all are going to be presented with the ultimate gift of all and as we come to this table to receive Him in the Eucharist, let us thank the Lord for this faith which he has given us! Let us receive him again today so that he may fortify and strengthen our faith in him now and always! Let us ask him to guide our thoughts, our feelings and our actions.

This week’s gospel portrays for us the image of Jesus showing his sacred wounds to his disciples. This past week many people throughout the world, have been making the Novena to the Divine Mercy. The novena began on Good Friday and concludes the Sunday after Easter which is today. It involves some special prayers and an image of Jesus with rays of grace coming from his wounded side. This devotion to the Divine Mercy was given to a simple Polish nun, Sister Faustina, who has now been declared a Saint. Saint Faustina had a glimpse of so many souls falling into hell and she was told that the only thing which could rescue people from that fate is the Divine Mercy.

We, here at Saint Philip are privileged to have on display in the Blessed Sacrament Chapel, the Image of the 'Divine Marcy.' I invite you after mass to spend some time in front of the Image contemplating on the wounds of Christ and the Love that emanates from those sacred wounds. Then at 3:00pm this afternoon, we will be saying the Divine Chaplet right here at church. I hope you can join us then.

We have not been given the experience of the Risen Christ saying, "Put your hands in my hands and in my side." Instead, we have been given the experience of an empty tomb and the Lord saying, "**Blessed are those who have not seen, yet believe.**" We are blessed by God right here right now because we are putting our faith and our trust in Him. We do not have physical proof. All we have is our faith. And we have our desire to believe. And that is all we need. **"As the Father has sent me, so I send you."** Armed with that belief and that faith, at each mass like the first witnesses, we are sent forth out of this church into the world to testify in word and in example that Jesus is indeed alive among us living in the members of his body the church. We are sent to share and to spread what we believe with others who do not yet believe and to invite back those who for some reason have lost their way. We trust in God, and without seeing we believe. Christ is risen. He is risen indeed. This is our Faith!!

***The Lord is on watch. He is always near. The Lord is my Shepherd. I walk with no fear.  
May God Bless each and everyone of you.***

