



Second Sunday of Easter

Order for Liturgy of the Word

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Entrance Antiphon:

Like newborn infants, you must long for the pure, spiritual milk, that in him you may grow to salvation, alleluia.

1 Pt 2:2

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

Sisters and Brothers, God invites us to hear his Word. Let us bless him for his goodness. Blessed be God forever. **Response:** Blessed be God forever.

Introduction:

We gather today to celebrate the Lord's Day. One with our sisters and brothers and with the entire Church, we will listen to God's Word and join in prayer. As we prepare to hear of God's love in Christ, let us acknowledge that the Lord is the source of pardon and strength.

Lord Jesus, you came to reconcile us to one another and to the Father, Lord, have mercy.

Response: Lord, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, you heal the wounds of sin and division: Christ, have mercy.

Response: Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, you intercede for us with your Father, Lord, have mercy.

Response: Lord, have mercy.

Glory to God in the highest. And on earth peace to men of good will. We praise You. We bless You. We adore you. We glorify You. We give You thanks for Your great glory. Lord God, heavenly King, O God the almighty Father. Lord Jesus Christ, Only-begotten Son, Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father, you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us; you take away the sins of the world, receive our prayer; you are seated at the right hand of the Father, have mercy on us. For you alone are the holy One, you alone are the Lord, you alone

are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father.
Amen.

Let us pray:

God of everlasting mercy, who in the very recurrence of the paschal feast kindle the faith of the people you have made your own, increase, we pray, the grace you have bestowed, that all may grasp and rightly understand in what font they have been washed, by whose Spirit they have been reborn, by whose Blood they have been redeemed. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen

First Reading

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles

4:32-35

The community of believers was of one heart and mind, and no one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they had everything in common. With great power the apostles bore witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great favor was accorded them all. There was no needy person among them, for those who owned property or houses would sell them, bring the proceeds of the sale, and put them at the feet of the apostles, and they were distributed to each according to need. The word of the Lord.

R. Thanks be to God.

Responsorial Psalm

Ps 118: 2-4, 13-15, 22-24

R. (1) Give thanks to the Lord for he is good, his love is everlasting.

Let the house of Israel say, "His mercy endures forever." Let the house of Aaron say, "His mercy endures forever." Let those who fear the LORD say, "His mercy endures forever."

R. Give thanks to the Lord for he is good, his love is everlasting.

I was hard pressed and was falling, but the LORD helped me. My strength and my courage is the LORD, and he has been my savior. The joyful shout of victory in the tents of the just.

R. Give thanks to the Lord for he is good, his love is everlasting.

The stone which the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. By the LORD has this been done; it is wonderful in our eyes. This is the day the LORD has made; let us be glad and rejoice in it.

R. Give thanks to the Lord for he is good, his love is everlasting.

Second Reading

A reading from the first Letter of Saint John

5: 1-6

Beloved: Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is begotten by God, and everyone who loves the Father loves also the one begotten by him. In this way we know that we love the children of God when we love God and obey his commandments. For the love of God is this, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome, for whoever is begotten by God conquers the world. And the victory that conquers the world is our faith. Who indeed is the victor over the world but the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? This is the one who came through water and blood, Jesus Christ, not by water alone, but by water and blood. The Spirit is the one that testifies, and the Spirit is truth. The word of the Lord.

R. Thanks be to God.

Gospel acclamation:

R. Alleluia, alleluia

You believe in me, Thomas, because you have seen me, says the Lord; blessed are they who have not seen me, but still believe!

Jn 20:29

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel proclamation

A reading from the holy Gospel according to 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 nailmarks 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 Christ, the Son of God, and that through this belief you may have life in his name. The Gospel of the Lord. **R.** Praise to you Lord, Jesus Christ.

Conversing with the Word

In the First Reading we have a glowing picture of the early Christian community: one heart, one mind, no one of them claimed anything as his or her own. So stunning was their witness that respect was paid by all.

There were no needy in their midst, and each was provided for according to need. Perhaps they felt, in the words recorded in the First Letter of John (Second Reading), that, as believers in Jesus as Son of God, they could take on the world.

The account of the earliest community, however—the community hidden behind locked doors (Gospel), the community hiding in fear—reveals that perhaps not all was sweetness and light. It is noteworthy that the first word attributed to the risen Lord is “peace.”

One can presume, then, that this community was somehow in a state of disquiet. And it seems that the reason was not only fear and terrible disappointment. Quite possibly it may have been divisiveness, since it is forgiveness that Jesus next addresses: “If you forgive others’ sins, they are forgiven them; if you hold them bound, they are held bound.” What is it that is to be forgiven by the gift of the Spirit’s breath?

Scripture recounts that “it happened” that Thomas was absent when Jesus came. Later the community greets Thomas with the words, “We have seen the Lord.” And he quite simply refuses to accept their testimony. “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.”

Whether this was a major source of division or not, it is evident that Thomas is the first Christian to dissent formally from a fundamental conviction of the gathered church. After all, he does not believe in their testimony to the Resurrection.

Despite the wound of this division, however, Thomas remains with the community and they seem to welcome him. In fact, the next time Jesus appears in their midst, a week later, Thomas is present. And Jesus speaks directly to him: “Do not persist in your

unbelief, but believe.”

I have found this a fascinating and rather challenging narrative. Even if forgiveness is not the theme of the Thomas incident, it is clearly the case that Thomas is with the community he so profoundly challenges.

I’m afraid that if I had been running the church it might have been otherwise. I find in myself strong inclinations to exclude from the category of believers those who seem to reject significant parts of our doctrine and practice. And yet, the example of the resurrection community undermines such an attitude. Thomas was not excluded. He was not kicked out or given an either-or choice concerning the Resurrection of Christ. He was welcome. Apparently, he was forgiven, not bound, even though at the time he had not yet recanted his doubt. Again, I am not constitutionally inclined to take much delight in such an observation, but the evidence of the text warrants it. And it says something important to us all.

What provided the occasion for the renewed entry of Jesus into the community was the fact that they were gathered together in his name. At least Thomas had not hardened himself to their testimony. At least he had not put himself out of and above the Church. He may have had the attitude of a dissenter, but it was in the context of Christ as the center of their relationship. There is division, but there is also humility and openness.

Jesus says to Thomas and us: “Enter the wounds: the wounds of my humanity, of my Church, of my crucified body, my risen body and my mystical body.”

And the reply of Thomas, the doubter, the unbeliever, the skeptic? In the strongest divinity text of the New Testament, he says, “My Lord and my God.” Such is the transformative power of resurrection faith.

“These have been recorded to help you believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, so that through this faith you may have life in his name.”

May they help us believe. And forgive.

Father John Kavanaugh, SJ, was a professor of Philosophy at St. Louis University in St. Louis. He reached many people during his lifetime. Modification to text.

Profession of Faith:

I believe in one God,
the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all things visible and invisible.
I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the Only Begotten Son of God,
born of the Father before all ages.
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
consubstantial with the Father;
through him all things were made.
For us men and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,
and by the Holy Spirit
was incarnate of the Virgin Mary,
and became man.

For our sake he was crucified un-
der Pontius Pilate, he suffered
death and was buried, and rose
again on the third day in accord-
ance with the Scriptures.

He ascended into heaven and is seated
at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again in glory
to judge the living and the dead
and his kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the
giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the
Son,

Who with the Father and the Son is
adored and glorified, who has spoken
through the prophets.

I believe in one, holy, catholic and
apostolic Church. I confess one Baptism
for the forgiveness of sins and I look
forward to the resurrection of the dead
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Prayers of the Faithful

Introduction: The awe and great joy which filled the hearts of those who witnessed the resurrected Christ continues to echo throughout the whole Church and so with confidence we pray:

Intentions: May Jesus' greeting, "Peace be with you" bring comfort to those who are distressed at this time; we pray to the Lord.

Response: Lord, hear our prayer.

May the newly baptized and those received into the Church in the Easter Vigil continue their journey in faith with eagerness and joy; we pray to the Lord.

Response: Lord, hear our prayer.

May we, like the disciples who exclaimed to Thomas, "We have seen the Lord", be bold disciples who give steadfast witness to the risen and ever present Christ; we pray to the Lord. **Response:** Lord, hear our prayer.

May those who are questioning their faith or God's presence in their lives be led by the Spirit to new insights and their doubts, dispelled; we pray to the Lord. **Response:** Lord, hear our prayer.

May those who are weeping and filled with grief at this time be brought to renewed hope, for Christ indeed is risen; we pray to the Lord.

Response: Lord, hear our prayer.

For those who have died: may they rest in the peace of Christ and the promise of the resurrection; we pray to the Lord.

Response: Lord, hear our prayer.

Prayer: Loving Father, through the raising of your Son, Jesus, from the dead, you have given us the pledge of eternal life. May we live this present life with our eyes fixed on the heavenly city, Jerusalem. For this and all our intentions we pray to you, through Christ our Lord, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, forever and ever. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer:

Let us pray with confidence to the Father in the words our Savior gave us:

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. Amen.

In the love of Christ, let us offer one another a sign of peace.

Communion Antiphon: Bring your hand and feel the place of the nails, and do not be unbelieving but believing, alleluia. Cf. Jn 20:27

Spiritual Communion:

My Jesus, I believe that you are present in the Most Holy Sacrament. I love you above all things and I desire to receive you into my soul. Since I cannot at this moment receive you sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart. I embrace you as if you were already there and unite myself wholly to you. Never permit me to be separated from you. Amen.

A Prayer After Communion

Grant, we pray, almighty God, that our spiritual reception of the paschal Sacrament may have a continuing effect in our minds and hearts. Through Christ our Lord. Amen

Blessing—making the sign of the cross:

May the Lord bless us, protect us, and bring us to everlasting life.

Response: Amen.

Let us go in peace, alleluia, alleluia.

Response: Thanks be to God, alleluia, alleluia.

Closing Thoughts:

Faith in the resurrection of Jesus Christ is much more than simply believing in an amazing fact. Each of this Sunday's readings reminds us that belief in Jesus' resurrection is accepting and participating in a relationship that can enliven every part of our lives—now and forever.

John may speak of Jesus appearing simply to “the disciples,” unnumbered and unnamed, to help us later readers include ourselves in the picture. To enable those disciples to be sent as Jesus was sent, Jesus breathes on them and says, “Receive the Holy Spirit.” When we recall that this remarkable action is occurring near the end of a book that began with the words, “In the beginning,” it is not hard to see in this breathing an allusion to the creation of Adam.

Easter enables a new creation: a frightened people are empowered to live out Jesus' mission of sharing the life of God with others through their own self-giving in imitation of Jesus. If the beatitude, “Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed,” is not clear enough for us, the author's own statement of purpose is crystal clear: “These [signs] 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” (Jn 20:31).

If we want a concrete illustration of what “life in his name” entails, we need look no further than the cameo picture that Luke provides in today's First Reading from Acts. Although vowed religious communities have, through the centuries, taken this summary as a model for their community life, the context of this passage in Acts suggests that Luke intends this to be a portrait of Christian community generally. The details are worth pondering.

They devoted themselves to the teaching [*didache*] of the apostles, to the communal life [*koinonia*], to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers. We recognize here the perennial ingredients of Church life. The apostolic “teaching” would, no doubt, include the sayings of Jesus and the interpretations of his life by way of texts from the Hebrew Scriptures. The “communal life” includes the generous sharing of possessions mentioned later in this description. The “breaking of the bread”, as in the Emmaus account in Luke's Gospel (Lk 24:13ff), is a reference to the celebration of the Lord's Supper. And “the prayers” likely include continued engagement in the Temple liturgy.

Awe [*phobos*] came upon everyone. Some translations interpret this as a description of

outsiders' response to the apostolic "wonders and signs," but the statement can just as easily be taken as a description of the community itself. If so, it likely refers to that fear of God which the Hebrew Scriptures name as the beginning of wisdom. Belief in the resurrection of Jesus, repentance, baptism, and the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38-41) have revived in these pious Jews an awe for the presence and power of the Creator.

All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their property and possessions and divide them among all according to each one's need. This spells out part of what is meant by the earlier mention of communal life. The very phrasing suggests that such sharing of goods is a spontaneous expression of the Easter faith.

When one takes the Creator personally, one uses creatures differently and more generously.

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Modification to text.

Art: *The Incredulity of St. Thomas*, 1602-03, by Michelangelo Caravaggio

Seeing Is Believing

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 it." John 20:25 (NIV)

The puzzle is based on John 20:19-31



K T S T K O N V A E S N M G G
 Q X U H H T D R H G S M Q S S
 L T F O B W K E M N W I J P R
 E Y R M E E X K G H G R Q Z C
 W Y V A L T H I I A Y A B C S
 Q V V S I O S Q L N S C O S S
 D A V Q E G C C C D F L B H P
 O O E L V E W K W S J E S O T
 O S S U E T S A E X B S L W O
 R M O A D H D B J D P V C E U
 S H V C I E O I E T P P J D C
 D Q S D L R R E C O R D E D H
 S I D E I I J P Q I Y J S Y E
 V M D I S C I P L E S X U I D
 V E D O U B T I N G H F S P A

THOMAS	DISCIPLES	DOORS	MIRACLES	TOUCHED
HANDS	TOGETHER	DOUBTING	SHOWED	SIGNS
SIDE	RECORDED	BELIEVED	JESUS	LOCKED