

2nd Sunday of Easter

Divine mercy Sunday

Octave Day of Easter

The compassion of God is beyond all telling. We gather in the hope given by the resurrection and know that we share in the joy of the promise of an eternal inheritance offered to us.

The mercy of God reaches down from the heavens into the hearts of the people who turn to the Lord.

Acts 4:32-35

The early Church, gathered together, is shown as a foundation for prayer, unity and the sharing of goods for the good of all.

1 John 5:1-6

Love of God is revealed in love of one's neighbour.

John 20:19-31

The doubting apostle, Thomas, discovers new faith in the risen Christ.



Reflection

On the evening of the resurrection, the disciples were gathered in fear behind locked doors. They were overjoyed when the Risen Lord appeared in their midst with a greeting of "peace" (Hebrew, Shalom).

Just as God breathed life into Adam, the first living being (see Gn 2:7), the Son of God breathed the life-giving Spirit upon his disciples, sending them forth with the power to forgive sins.

Thomas (called Didymus, meaning "twin") was absent on this first occasion and he refused to believe their testimony. His defiant words "unless I see" (Jn 20:25) came from someone who knew Jesus as an intimate friend. A week later, the Risen Christ appeared again, and this time Thomas was there.

When Thomas saw Christ's wounds, he cried out that Jesus was "My Lord and My God." Jesus told Thomas that people who believed by faith (without seeing) were more blessed than people who needed visible proof.

Eight days later

Today's Gospel tells two stories about the resurrection of Jesus.

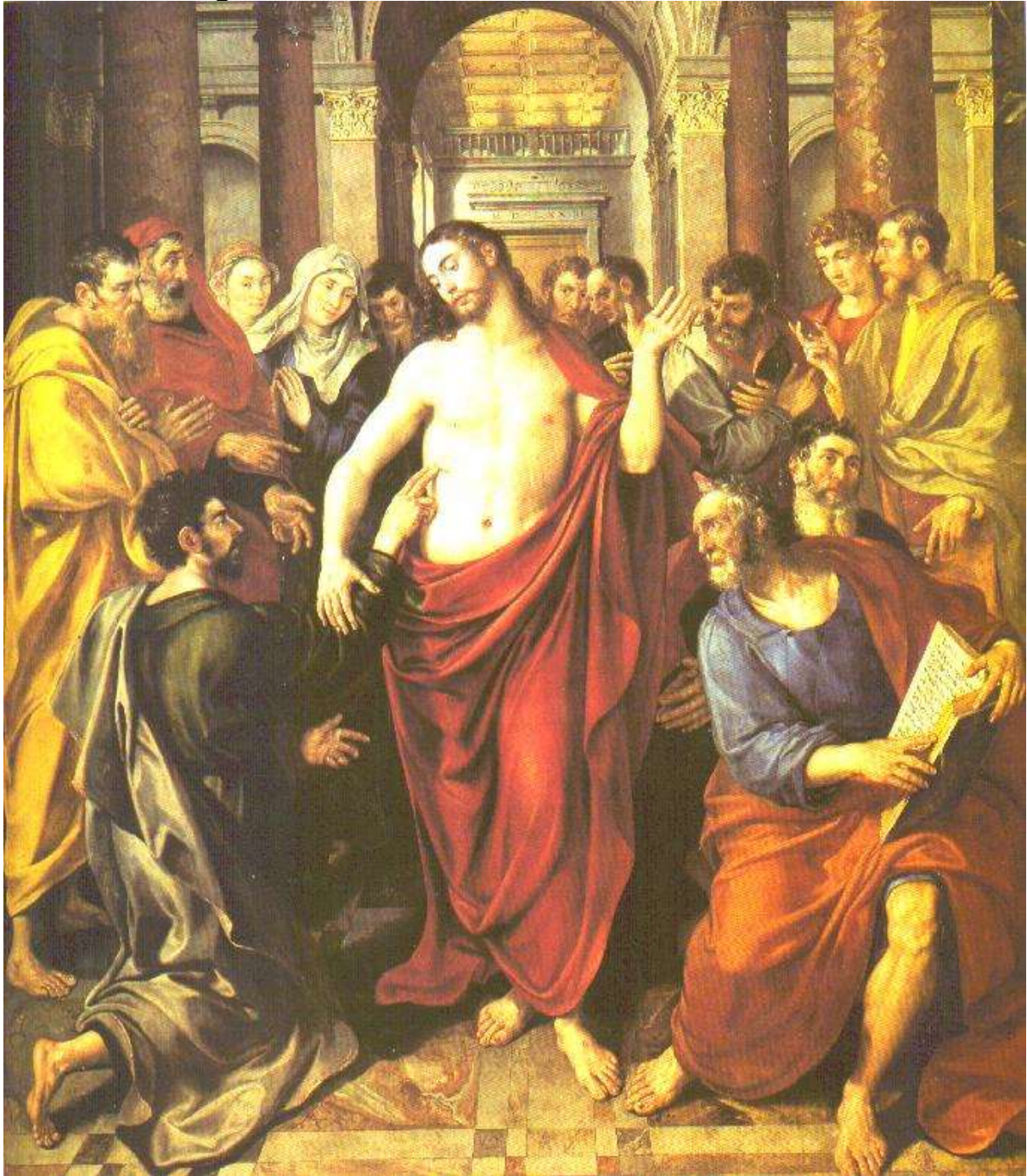
The first story is how he appeared to the disciples on the evening of the first Easter Sunday, and the second, the story of the appearance to Thomas eight days later.

Let's begin with a brief look at the first story. It starts by emphasising the fear of the disciples. They're huddled together in a room behind closed doors. Despite having heard from Mary Magdalene, Peter and the Beloved Disciple that the tomb of Jesus had been found empty on Easter Sunday morning, the disciples remain uncertain. Suddenly, Jesus appears among them. He greets them with a word of peace and shows them his hands and his side. The risen body of the Lord still retains its wounds. But they're no longer the signs of suffering but signs of victory.

After he'd greeted the disciples, Jesus does something extraordinary. He breathes on them, giving them the gift of the Holy Spirit. This action is a rich symbol and it reminds us of several passages in the Old Testament. The first describes how God created the first human beings from clay, and, it says, "he breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being" (Gn 2:7). A second important passage is the vision of the prophet Ezekiel. He saw the wind stirring the dry bones strewn out in the valley, "and", it says, "they lived, and stood on their feet, a vast multitude" (Ezk 37:10). r

The resurrection of Jesus marks the beginning of the new creation. Just as the Old Testament prophets received the Spirit to proclaim the message of God, the disciples of Jesus receive the Spirit to proclaim the message of Easter. The message of Easter is a message of forgiveness. Like the disciples, we're no longer trapped by memories of sin in an old world of fear.

Forgiveness, and its power to transform people with new life, is at the heart of the Easter message.



Our second story is the appearance of Jesus to Thomas, contains a bit of humour. Thomas gives the impression of being a boastful fellow; he's sure that

he won't be trapped like the others in a rather optimistic hope that Jesus had come back to life. Only, he says, if he can put his hands into the wounds will he believe. Jesus appears the following Sunday just as unexpectedly as he did the first time; he invites Thomas to do just that 'put his hands into the wounds'. Immediately, the boaster is transformed. He becomes the devout believer. He professes his faith in those famous words, "My Lord and my God."

The final words of Jesus in this scene are words of blessing for people like us; people who have not seen, and yet believe.

Notice how the Gospel uses the symbol of the wounds of Jesus. The risen body of the Lord still carries the marks of the nails. It's a bit like that in life: people are often wounded. They carry the scars of physical wounds as well as the hidden wounds of neglect, abuse or psychological damage done in childhood. Wounds like that don't go away. The wounds of Jesus were not miraculously sealed over when he emerged from the tomb, but they were transformed so that they became the signs of new life and of victory over death.

Pray this Easter week especially for people who fear that their wounds will never heal over. A friend of mine once had a very precious piece of pottery that got smashed. She tried to mend it, but many small pieces were missing. Rather than throw it out, she used it as a candleholder. To her amazement, the places where the bits were missing allowed the light of the candle to escape and cast beautiful shadows on the wall. She learned a valuable lesson — sometimes it is through our wounds that the light shines brightest.



DIVINE MERCY SUNDAY

Sr Faustina Kowalska was a Polish nun who became God's instrument in proclaiming the fact of the Divine mercy toward every human being. Sr. Faustina was inspired by a vision in which Jesus told her that a painting should be made of his image with the invocation "Jesus, I trust in you." She commissioned the painting in 1935. Cardinal Karol Wojtyla, then Archbishop of Krakow (later St. Pope John Paul II), began Sr. Faustina's process of beatification. At her canonization in 2000, the first saint of the new millennium, the Pope designated the Second Sunday of Easter to be Divine Mercy Sunday.

The Pope's final days coincided with the Church's preparation to celebrate the feast he described as "flowing from Christ's most profound mercy." Speaking of St. Faustina and the importance of the message contained in her Diary, the Pope called her "the great apostle of Divine Mercy in our time.


EASTERTIDE

After the dramatic events of Holy Week and Easter we now have the longest Season in the Church's Year - the joyful Season of Eastertide. This period of fifty days is a time of sustained gladness, which comes through reading and reflecting on the Scriptures which describe the risen life of Jesus - not just his appearances to the disciples after the Resurrection, but the teachings from his ministry which reveal the risen life he now possesses. We also spend time hearing about how the Resurrection made a difference: how the timid and frightened disciples were able to leave

Jerusalem and proclaim a message of life over death to the whole world, as we read through the book of the Acts of the Apostles. We also linger over the first letter of Saint John, which ties together so many of the themes of Easter: life, faith, baptism, the Spirit - all brought together in the person of the Lord Jesus, risen from the dead.

WORDSEARCH

S	A	R	F	I	N	G	N	I	S	EVENING
I	D	E	H	T	A	E	R	B	O	DOORS
G	A	G	U	D	F	E	E	H	S	FEAR
R	N	N	S	O	O	E	D	O	S	PEACE
V	A	I	D	O	R	O	T	L	A	HANDS
E	I	F	N	S	G	S	R	E	M	SIDE
G	C	O	A	E	I	D	I	S	O	BREATHED
R	I	A	H	D	V	E	R	E	H	FORGIVE
O	T	A	E	F	E	E	B	A	T	THOMAS
F	T	S	E	P	S	L	I	A	N	HOLES
										NAILS
										FINGER



PERFECT JOY



The Perfect joy of St. Francis

La Perfecta alegría di San Francesco

St Francis and Br Leo were walking from Perugia to the Friary at Santa Maria degli Angeli. Along the road, Francis had described several situations which seem very wonderful and likely to fill you with joy – after each of them Francis said: ‘But that is not perfect joy!’

Eventually Leo asked Francis to describe what perfect joy was.

Francis said: “If, when we arrive at our destination, drenched with rain and freezing with cold, all covered with mud, exhausted and hungry; if, when we knock at the Friary door, the brother should come and ask us irritably who we are; if, after we have told him, ‘We are two of the brethren,’ he should answer crossly, ‘That’s not true.. You’re impostors; go away’

“If then he refuses to open to let us in, and leaves us outside, in the snow and rain, suffering from cold and hunger, then, if we accept such wrong treatment,

such cruelty and contempt with patience, without becoming all het up and without murmuring, then, sBrother Leo: That is perfect joy.”

I know it's not the same but we would like to apologise to all those good people who were turned away during Holy Week and Easter.

As Pope Francis says in his book 'Let Us Dream:' Each person, each family, every country is being tested, twisted, torn apart and tried by the Coronavirus. We are undergoing being "Sifted like wheat" – as Jesus said to Simon Peter.

Those turned away from the Church are very much in solidarity with the millions of people on the margins, the sufferings of the Rohingya, the Uighurs and the Yazidi, and so many others.

Be assured that you are in the prayers of the Franciscan Fraternity and that, if not 'Perfect Joy', you will certainly receive a reward from Almighty God.

A piece of calligraphic art featuring the words "He is Risen" in a highly decorative, cursive script. The letters are black and set against a light, textured background. The word "He" is at the top, "is" is in the middle, and "Risen" is at the bottom, with the letters flowing together in a continuous, elegant style.