

2 Easter Year B Readings and Commentary

Celebration Summary by Dave Pitt: The reaction of “Doubting Thomas” is very familiar to us. How often, when presented with news that seems unbelievable, do we not seek some sort of proof to verify the improbable claims? What is often overlooked in this Gospel story, however, is Jesus' response to Thomas of complete openness. Jesus does not evade the questions, nor lapse into a lengthy discourse about faith. Instead, Jesus offers Thomas the proof he seeks, and in Jesus' offer itself, rather than Thomas touching Jesus' wounds (which John decidedly does not mention) Thomas comes to faith in the risen Christ.

In today's reading from the Acts of the Apostles, we are presented with another instance of a faith-filled response to an out-of-the-ordinary request. The ability of the early Christians to lay all of their possessions at the feet of the Apostles suggests a faith in the openness of the Apostles themselves in the exercise of their ministry. There would have been no basis for the trust of the community if the Apostles were hoarding the collection.

When it comes to faith in Christ, we are clearly those about whom John writes in the conclusion to his Gospel - “those who have not seen and have believed.” There is, however, a vital role for the Church in evangelizing, since the Church offers others the opportunity to see the hands and side of Christ. Our challenge, as ministers of the Gospel, is to model the openness of Jesus and the integrity of the Apostles. In accepting and acting upon this responsibility, we may help others to proclaim, “My Lord and my God.”

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First Reading Acts 4:32-35

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles

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.

Commentary Acts 4:32-35 by John Paul Heil: Main Theme: The RESURRECTION of Jesus inspires communal SHARING with the NEEDY. Faith in the risen Jesus has resulted in an idyllic situation of unity and harmony within the early Christian community. This unity included a remarkable giving up of the rights of individual ownership and extended to a generous sharing with one another of all of their material belongings. This ideal of unity inspired by the resurrection of Jesus underscores for us today how great is the scandal of disunity among those who call themselves Christians--a scandal that has endured for so long that we take it for granted. Their willingness to give up private ownership for the sake of the greater good of unity challenges the various Christian groups of today to consider what they might need to sacrifice for the sake of greater Christian unity.

That the apostles bore witness with great power to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus prompts the questions: How are we bearing witness to the resurrection today? Can people see that our faith in the resurrection makes a difference in the kind of lives we lead?

Those who owned property in the early Christian community sold it and generously gave the proceeds to the community so that "there was no needy person among them." Does our faith in the risen Jesus inspire us to likewise share what we have with those who are needy among us?

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Responsorial Psalm Psalm 118:2-4, 13-15, 22-24

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

Or:

✠Alleluia.

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."

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.

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.

Commentary Psalm 118:2-4, 13-15, 22-24 by Tom Conry: The idea of the "cornerstone" can refer either to the square stone that supports the corner of a building or to the capstone of a building. The proverb in verse 22 is a proclamation of reversal, and is attached to the situation of the man who was taken for dead and is now fully alive. Within the psalm there is a constant alternating of the situation of the individual with the social situation of the community; in its performance it seems to make the journey from death to life of one person the symbol and inspiration of the whole group.

"The day that the Lord has made" (or, perhaps better, "the day on which the Lord has acted") marks the setting of this psalm as an important feast. The followers of Jesus took up this song and applied it to their own circumstances.

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Second Reading 1 John 5:1-6

A reading from the first Letter of Saint John

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.

Commentary 1 John 5:1-6 by Tom Conry: This psalm begins and ends with elements from a public liturgy of thanksgiving, and yet includes in its central portion elements of what seem like personal testimony. It contains a number of textual and translational difficulties (what does verse 27 mean, anyway?) and its form and setting have befuddled scripture scholars for many years, with no solutions in sight. Finally, the lectionary does not help, as it picks verses from disparate sections without making an apparent connection. With these kinds of inconsistencies and uncertainties, and with such a wide range of possible meanings, it is no wonder that Psalm 118 became an important text for many of the early Christian churches. Any number of interpreters took these verses of YHWH's vindication of an individual pilgrim and applied them to the life, suffering, and resurrection of Jesus. Indeed, that is what they seem to be doing in this liturgy!

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Gospel Acclamation John 20:29

✠ 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!

Gospel John 20:19-31

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John

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.

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Commentary John 20:19-31 by Tom Conry: Stories of the appearances of
Jesus after his crucifixion began to circulate through the churches very early
on. These experiences of the risen Christ to individuals and groups were put

into narrative form and told over and over.

Here the disciples are gathered together in the locked upper room, still filled with fear of the Judean elite who had cooperated with imperial Rome in arranging Jesus' execution. The background of this fear is not unfounded; not only are they under suspicion for their association with Jesus, but now the tomb is reported as being empty, and those who disturb graves are liable to capital punishment. In the midst of this tense situation, Jesus appears and breathes peace into their midst. In the early churches, baptism was the time when God bestowed the spirit, and this ritual breathing of Jesus fulfills the earlier promise of a baptism of the spirit for the disciples.

In the next appearance story, Thomas is reproached for not believing without seeing, but, as Jesus' earlier appearance has made clear, the rest of the disciples likewise needed proof, i.e. Jesus' manifestation in a locked room, before they would believe. The entire community, including Mary Magdalene, only believed when they saw. Jesus' words here indicate that from now, it is the testimony of the community that must be taken as authentic. Jesus has given the community authority to resolve disputes within the group (20:23) and, from now on, the demand for miracles will be taken as a sign of a lack of understanding and maturity.

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