

# Living the Word

MEDITATING ON THE SUNDAY GOSPEL

2nd Sunday of Easter - Divine Mercy Sunday.

A resource for personal, family  
and community prayer.

“Peace  
be with you”



## Gospel: John 20:19-29

<sup>19</sup>In the evening of the same day, the first day of the week, the doors were closed in the room where the disciples were, for fear of some of the Jews. Jesus came and stood among them. He said to them, ‘Peace be with you,’ <sup>20</sup>and after saying this, he showed them his hands and his side. The disciples were filled with joy at seeing the Lord. <sup>21</sup>And he said to them again, ‘Peace be with you. As the Father sent me, so am I sending you.’ <sup>22</sup>After saying this he breathed on them and said: ‘Receive the Holy Spirit. <sup>23</sup>Those whose sins you forgive, they are forgiven; those whose sins you retain, they are retained.’

<sup>4</sup>Thomas, called the twin, who was one of the Twelve, was not with them when Jesus

*You are invited to read the Gospel passage attentively, respectfully and reverently as a gift of God.*



came. <sup>25</sup>So the other disciples said to him, ‘We have seen the Lord,’ but he answered, ‘Unless I can see the holes that the nails made in his hands and can put my fingers into the holes they made, and unless I can put my hand into his side, I refuse to believe.’ <sup>26</sup>Eight days later the disciples were in the house again and Thomas was with them. The doors were closed, but Jesus came in and stood among them. ‘Peace be with you,’ he said. <sup>27</sup>Then he spoke to Thomas, ‘Put your finger here; look, here are my hands. Give me your

hand; put it into my side. Doubt no longer but believe.’ <sup>28</sup>Thomas replied, ‘My Lord and my God.’ <sup>29</sup>Jesus said to him, ‘You believe because you can see me. Happy are those who have not seen and yet believe.’

## Reading

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On the second Sunday of Easter, whether it be year A, B or C, the Gospel reading is always the same: John 20:19-29. Some years ago this Sunday was designated by Pope John Paul as Divine Mercy Sunday where we are invited to enter into an experience of the depth and richness of God’s mercy – compassion, understanding and forgiveness.

The disciples are in hiding, full of fear, grief and confusion. They know they have let him down. When he needed them most, they betrayed him. Suddenly he appears in their midst, breathes peace upon them and shows them his wounds. The experience of Good Friday was real, yet there is no recrimination or condemnation, only love. Jesus still believes in them, still loves them and wants them to proclaim that love to the world, just as he has done. Having experienced their own need of mercy, they are now ready for their mission.

Thomas is absent and refuses to believe until he can touch the wounds for himself. His refusal has earned him the reputation of “doubting Thomas”. Yet, he is a model for our faith. If our faith is to take root we need a personal encounter with Jesus rather than

relying on the faith of others. Thomas touches the wounds for himself and there encounters the mercy of God. He is transformed by the experience and, with awe, he exclaims: “My Lord and my God”.

## Recognising

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**You are invited to meditate on the passage, or any part of it, by letting it speak to your life experience until you feel to say “I recognise this passage.”**

**v19-20. “He said to them, ‘Peace be with you,’ and, after saying this, he showed them his hands and his side.”**

Can you enter into the experience of the Gospel from the perspective of the disciples by remembering a time when you suffered a great loss in your life that left you feeling vulnerable and afraid (a job loss, an illness, failure or grief)?

Remember how you hid behind closed doors, isolated and afraid, until a Jesus-figure came alongside you and breathed ‘new life’ into you by their faithful friendship and their willingness to share their vulnerability - by showing you their wounds.

**v23. “Those whose sins you forgive, they are forgiven; those whose sins you retain, they are retained.”**

Can you enter into the experience from the perspective of the disciples by remembering a profound experience of forgiveness and

mercy that touched you so deeply that you just knew it was God's doing and you were inspired to go out and show that same forgiveness to others?

**v25. "Unless I can see the holes that the nails made in his hands and can put my fingers into the holes they made, and unless I can put my hand into his side, I refuse to believe."**

Can you enter into the experience of the Gospel from the perspective of Thomas by remembering a time when, troubled by the past, you were finding it so difficult to move on in life? It was only when you were able to tend to the grief, or confess the wrongs, or be reconciled with another, that you really began to live again.

## Responding

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Having recognised God's presence in life, you are invited to **respond** in your own words, in prayer (thanksgiving, repentance and petition).

Loving God, we give thanks for those who have come behind the "closed doors" of our sorrow and grief. "Showing us their hands and their side", they have breathed their peace into us. Forgive us for the times when we have doubted your mercy and love, when we have hidden "behind the closed doors

"of our own guilt and shame. Bound by fear and anxiety, we felt we would never know the joy of life again.

Help us to remember, Father, that your name is "mercy", and that by confessing our sins - "putting our fingers into the holes the nails have made and putting our hand into his wounded side" - we will find a liberating joy to embrace the future.

## Resting

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You are invited to enter deep prayer by simply **resting** your heart in God's presence (Contemplative moment). The quiet repetition of a word or phrase from the passage might help you on this journey into greater silence and stillness, e.g. "**Peace be with you**".

## Reflecting

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From your journey with this passage, you are now invited to **reflect**, and put into your own words, any new insights or understanding that you have received (Wisdom moment).

From your journey with this passage, what new insight has been given to you into the meaning of 'mercy' or 'healing' or 'compassion'. It might read something like this: the most authentic bearers of mercy are those who have been touched by mercy themselves. This is only a sample. Try to uncover and express your own personal insight.



# Children

## *Reading*

The disciples who let Jesus down when he needed them most are locked behind closed doors and are full of fear after his death. To their surprise, the Risen Jesus appears among them and offers them peace as a sign of his mercy and love. Thomas doubted that Jesus had appeared because he was not there to see him with his own eyes. Jesus then appeared to the disciples again, and this time Thomas saw him and believed in him.

## *Recognising*

Can you remember a time when you let someone down - your parent, sibling or teacher- and you locked yourself away out of fear, but this person offered you peace as a sign of their mercy and love?

Can you remember meeting a person, maybe a grandparent, who encouraged you to trust in God and pointed to the reality of the Risen Jesus by their faith, hope and love?

## *Responding*

Father, I thank You for the 'Jesus people', my grandparents, parents and friends, who have embraced me with peace and continue to love me despite my mistakes.

Father, I am sorry for the times that, like Thomas, I doubted You and was blind to Your ongoing presence in my life through the loving words and actions of others.

Father, bless me with the faith of Thomas who saw and believed the Risen Jesus, so that I may share with others the good news of Your peace, mercy and love.

## *Resting*

Rest in the warm embrace of the Father by repeating "PEACE" for as long as it is possible. May you be filled with peace as you are drawn deeper into the Father's presence.

## *Reflecting*

Peace is a gift of mercy and trust that breathes fresh life into the person who offers it and the person who receives it.

**Lenten Lectio Series** - Lectio Booklet-Journeying with the Gospels of Lent- Year A (Now available). Meditate on the Way- Living the Word Podcast accompanies the series (Available on all podcast platforms). Further resources: [lectio.newrydominican.com](http://lectio.newrydominican.com)

A simple summary of Lectio steps can be found in the porch of the church.