

# Living the Word

MEDITATING ON THE SUNDAY GOSPEL

Year A - Pentecost Sunday

A resource for personal, family  
and community prayer.



“ PEACE  
BE WITH YOU ”

## Gospel: John 20:19-23

<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



“Those whose sins you forgive,  
they are forgiven...”

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



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.’

For more information check out <https://lectio.newrydominican.com> which includes this week’s Sunday Gospel podcast Living the Word - Meditate on the Way, Pentecost Series.

028 3026 2178 | [lectiocentre35@gmail.com](mailto:lectiocentre35@gmail.com)

## Reading

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Pentecost celebrates the coming of the Holy Spirit (the Spirit of Jesus, the Spirit of God) on his disciples.

The Greek word Pentecost means 'fifty' – situating this feast fifty days after Easter Sunday. However, in John's Gospel, from which we read today, Jesus bestows the Holy Spirit on the disciples on "the evening of the first day of the week" – in other words, Easter Sunday.

This passage recalls the first encounter in John's Gospel between the Risen Jesus and his disciples. Overwhelmed by fear, loss, grief and guilt at the death of Jesus, the disciples are now taking refuge behind "closed doors". While Jesus has been clearly let down by his disciples, there is no trace of bitterness or resentment, only words and gestures communicating mercy, understanding, peace and love - "You are still my friends, I believe in you, I love you." He breathes into them his Spirit of new life, new joy and new hope. Now that they are aware of their own need of God's mercy, Jesus entrusts them with the important work of continuing his mission of bringing God's mercy into the world.

## 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."

**"He said to them, 'Peace be with you'."**

Can you remember a greeting of peace that lifted your heart?

**"He breathed on them and said 'Receive the Holy Spirit'."**

Can you remember an experience when you retreated behind "closed doors" at a time of loss, grief, guilt or failure? Remember the 'Jesus people' who came behind those "closed doors" to meet you there -people who accepted you as you were, continued to believe in you, and opened the doors (perhaps slowly and gradually) to new life.

Can you remember a significant event or happening in your community, church or country that lifted hearts and minds of the people - inspiring hope and renewing faith in a brighter future for all?

Can you remember an experience of love or kindness that touched you deeply - igniting a new spring in your step, light in your eyes and hope in your heart?

**"Those whose sins you forgive they are forgiven,"**

Remember a time when you experienced a surprising generosity of heart in yourself as you showed forgiveness to someone who had wronged you. You just knew that it was God's doing.

**"Those whose sins you retain they are retained."**

Remember the times when you failed to show forgiveness and how it left you imprisoned in your own anger and bitterness.

## *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).

Gracious Father, thank you for those who didn't give up on me at times when I had messed up – like the risen Jesus, they found their way behind my "closed doors". While acknowledging the wrong I had done, they believed that it didn't define me and that I was capable of better. Through their acceptance, understanding and forgiveness they "breathed a new spirit into me," gave me a new belief in myself and new hope for a better future.

Loving Father, I ask forgiveness for any lack of trust in your mercy and love that has left me trapped behind the "closed doors" of fear, guilt or shame and prevented me from experiencing the freedom, joy and peace that you long to give me. Lord, have mercy.

Loving Father, there are times when

we, as followers of your Son Jesus, feel tired, frustrated and disheartened. Send us new manifestations of the Risen Jesus – people who will come behind our "closed doors" to breathe new life into us, dispelling the fears and the doubts, and stirring up new enthusiasm and commitment for the mission of mercy that you have entrusted to us.

## *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. "**He breathed on them.**"

## *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 the passage what new insight or understanding has been given to you into the meaning of mercy, or peace, or joy, or risen life?

**"The only authentic bearers of mercy are those who have been touched by mercy themselves."**



## Children

### *Reading*

When the disciples are filled with so much fear about leaving Jesus on his own to die, their friend Jesus appears among them, showing that he still loves them and offers them a deep peace. Jesus turns their fear into joy. Jesus repeats his offer of peace before sending the disciples out with the breath of the Holy Spirit with a new focus of turning people's fear to joy.

### *Recognising*

Can you remember a 'Jesus person', maybe a sibling, parent or grandparent, who continued to love you despite your mistakes or wrongdoings?

Can you remember a time when you were worried about something or someone, like the disciples, and a friend, like Jesus, came to you and turned your fear to joy?

### *Responding*

Father, I thank You for the 'Jesus people' in my life, especially my parents, grandparents and friends, who have turned my fear to joy

and encouraged me to be a person who turns the fear to joy.

Father, I am sorry for the times that I let You down, that I let other people down by my mistakes and wrongdoings, especially when they needed me most.

Father, I ask that I may be a person who goes out with the breath of the Holy Spirit to be a change-maker, turning fear into joy, so that others may know that Jesus is alive by my life.

### *Resting*

Rest in the loving embrace of the Father by repeating "JOY" for as long as it is possible. May your heart be filled with new joy as you are drawn deeper into the Father's presence.

### *Reflecting*

Turning someone's fear into joy brings new life to a person who can then share this new life with others.

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