

Readings for April 11, 2010

Acts 5:27-32

Psalm 118:14-29

or Psalm 150

Revelation 1:4-8

John 20:19-31

The Gospel John 20:19-31

When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then 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." When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told 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 in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe."

A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them.

Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe."

Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe."

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

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Our Easter Vigil began with the Pascal candle, that will burn for fifty days, brought into a dark church to symbolize the light of Christ coming into our world. It will burn through the day of Pentecost.

We are in the highest season of the Church, the Easter Season, when in a span of fifty days, we experience three major festivals: The Resurrection of Christ - The

Ascension of Christ, and the coming of the Holy Spirit - the day of the birth of the Church, celebrated on the Day of Pentecost. They are all linked and they move us from the joy of Easter morning to the understanding of our mission.⁽¹⁾

Today's Gospel (John 20:19-31) brings us to look again at our own journey of faith.

On the night after Jesus' body had been placed in the tomb, the disciples, with the exception of Thomas, came together in an upper room. In a locked room - they met in fear. In the midst of their fear and grief, Jesus entered the locked room, and greeted them - Peace be with you.

When Jesus returned to the upper room a week later he addressed Thomas' need to see and touch and feel the wounds. Thomas holds to us the mirror our own doubts and needs. Have we never doubted God?⁽¹⁾ Jesus understands our doubts. God is willing to accompany us beyond our doubts.

There are many times when we, like the disciples in the upper room, stand in fear. Jesus says to us, "Peace be with you." And we go out in peace, sometimes still in fear and trembling but in the name of Christ. We are called to live the teachings of Jesus, to love God with all our heart and mind and soul and to love our neighbors as ourselves.

Many of us are not comfortable speaking of witnessing. Yet this is what we are doing every time we help anyone in Jesus' name. This is what we do when we stand with those who are asking for justice.

I have seen first hand the deplorable living conditions offered to the migrant laborers in Immokalee. They work for below poverty wages, much of the time working for about half of minimum wage. There is no job security, no health insurance. They are not treated with respect or dignity. I know of their courage in standing up for their fellow human beings - of helping and protecting each other.

These individuals have come to this country for the promises of America. Many come because there is no work at home and the alternative is to watch their families starve.

Refugees are rarely welcome in the nations that receive them. It is too easy for the fortunate citizens of our free country to overlook the dangers and deprivations

which drive people to leave everything behind and flee to an uncertain future in an unknown land. Let us not forget that when the Son of God assumed human flesh, it was as a child refugee.⁽³⁾

As we live out our own journey of faith we hold before us the light of Christ coming into our world. We cannot be complacent while others are not treated with justice and dignity.

Loving God, we hold before you farm workers who toil in our fields and we pray for their families. We especially pray for those suffering in Human Trafficking. We pray for Corporate America to open their hearts and hear the cries of God's own children as they struggle to survive. In Jesus holy name we pray. Amen.

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(1) Synthesis Sunday after Easter 2009

(2) Synthesis Sunday after Easter 2009

(3) Forward Day by Day Tuesday December 29, 2009 The Holy Innocents.