

Anthea's Reflection 19 April 2020



Today is the Second Sunday of Easter, also known as Low Sunday and the Sunday of St Thomas. After the great high of Easter we come back down to earth with a bump and so today has been called Low Sunday. However today is anything but an anti-climax, for we read of the visit of the risen Lord Jesus to his disciples and we hear words of comfort, encouragement and commission.

Reading 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.

Reflection

When I read today's gospel, I was struck by a number of threads within it – the **doubt, the fear, the belief and the peace**, but what really stood out for me, in the current times, were the two references, in verses 19 and 26, of **locked and closed doors**.

19 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."

26 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."

The verses struck me of the parody with our church doors being locked and us spending much of our time in our homes behind closed doors, worshipping in different ways. This has challenged us but also provided opportunity for us to seek Jesus in other ways. There are many ways to worship, praise and celebrate outside of a church building and very often in people's houses, but perhaps not alone and in isolation. However, opportunities arise from every situation and maybe this time of enforced stillness is enabling us to reflect, to

see and hear more. Psalm 46 verse 10 invites us to, 'Be Still and know that I am God' and in Mark Chapter 4 verse 39 Jesus commands the wind and waves, 'Peace, be still'.

Jesus went to the cross with self-sacrificing love, and he triumphed over death and sin with his resurrection, and we can be confident that we too can share in his risen life. And that is what we are celebrating during our journey through the 50 days of Easter until we are blessed with Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

As we journey in conversation with God through the 50 days of Easter, our task is to embrace the stillness, face the **doubt** and the **fear**, find and renew our **belief** and God's **peace**. The message of the Resurrection is that through Jesus, God promises us new life and new life casts out fear. Yet, in our new life we will still bear the scars of the wounds caused by our fear. Scarred and wounded we might remain, but we will be no longer afraid. Jesus is saying to us, 'Peace be with you!'

Your Reflection

The post resurrection Jesus is different to what Jesus was like before he was crucified. He now appears and disappears in ways he never did previously. Twice during today's reading Jesus suddenly appears in a locked room. And while his friends recognise him on both of these occasions, there are other occasions when he is not recognised straight away, such as when the women visit his tomb, and when Cleopas and his companion encounter Jesus on the road to Emmaus.

Would we recognise Jesus if he were in our midst today?

A Child's Thought

Ben, aged 5, recently had questions about whether we can see God. When his parents spoke to their minister about it, he replied that he believes he sees God when he looks into the eyes of other people. Ben loved this explanation and repeated it to others. During a recent visit, a close friend's 3-year-old went up to Ben's mother after speaking with Ben. She put her hands on Ben's mother's cheeks, looked deeply into my eyes and said, "I see God."

Would we like this to be said to us – I very much like to think so.

Music: Be Still and Know that I Am God

<https://youtu.be/2zNOXfOTC8U>

https://youtu.be/AFoNZ_WKr_U

Intersessions

Through the risen Jesus we have a living hope which will never spoil or fade.

Lord in your presence

We lift our hearts to you

We bring to you, Lord
Our nation, our world, our universe
All the areas that are fastened shut
All the bewildered confusion
All the doubts and insecurity
And the searching for inner peace

Lord in your presence

We lift our hearts to you

We bring to you, Lord, our homes and families
And all the joys and sorrows of our relationships
We bring the rooms in which we eat

And work and relax
And invite you into them all
Lord in your presence
We lift our hearts to you

We bring to you, Lord
Those whom life has damaged
And all who find it difficult to trust in you
We bring you those who need refreshment and hope
Comfort, healing and inner serenity

Lord in your presence
We lift our hearts to you

We bring to you, Lord those whose earthly journey
Has come to an end
And those who are finding it hard to cope with their loss
We give thanks for those who have tended them during their dying
And pray for those who face that last journey alone.

Lord in your presence
We lift our hearts to you

Thank you, Lord, for giving us space and support, guidance and forgiveness, challenge and reassurance. Grant us your peace. Amen