

REFLECTIONS FOR THE SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER ~ 24 April 2022

The Mount ~ The Residence at Litledale

“This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it” (Ps 118:24). This verse from Psalm 118, in today’s Liturgy of the Word, gives us a thread to bind our readings together. During the readings, we are present at Easter day, eight days later, we are present in the early days just after the Ascension and Pentecost when the disciples begin to live the Resurrection, and we are present many days and years after the Church has gone beyond Judah to the Gentile lands as far as Greece.



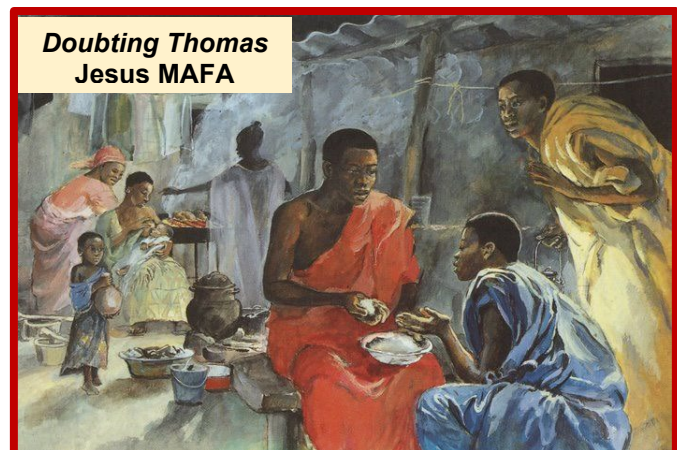
Jesus appears in the Upper Room
Artist Unknown

The Gospel passage from John begins on the evening of the day of the Resurrection, the first day of the week. In the opening verses, we are given three reminders of the first day of creation. We are told explicitly that it is the first day of the week, the echo of the first day of creation in Genesis 1. The disciples are in the house locked in fear of the Jews, an echo of the “formless void and darkness which covered the face of the deep (Gen 1:3). Just as God spoke on the first day of the week and darkness came to an end with the word “Let there be light” (Gen 1:3) so too Jesus speaks a word, “Jesus came and stood among them and said, ‘Peace be with you.’” (Jn 20:21). After he said this, he shows them his hands and his side.

He then begins to teach them what Resurrection means. Jesus speaks about forgiveness and reconciliation, “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” (Jn 20:22-23). Too often, we have confined this teaching to the

Sacrament of Reconciliation and the priest’s ministry of forgiveness of sins. It means far more, indeed what we pray in every “Our Father,” “Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.” Resurrection is about reconciliation, reconciliation of the rupture that came with the tragic end of the creation story – the rupture between humans and Earth, and the rupture among humans. How do we live reconciliation every day – in our relationships with the persons with whom we live, in our sponsored or individual ministries, in our advocacy work, in our prayer in solidarity with those who are suffering or with our wounded Earth?

The second part of the Gospel happens eight days later, again the first day of the week. Thank heavens for Thomas who demands to see Jesus before he believes! Now we are given another chance to remember the simple words which we passed over in the first part of the reading, “Jesus showed them his hands and his side” (Jn 20:20). Now we recall a second learning from the resurrection. In his resurrection appearances, Jesus is known by showing the wounds in his hands, feet, and side. In his resurrected life, Jesus’ suffering does not



Doubting Thomas
Jesus MAFA

end. He continues to suffer with us, with all creatures, with our wounded Earth – what we now describe as an element of “deep incarnation.”



Jesus takes Thomas' hand, Artist Unknown

Jesus is known after his resurrection by the wounds in his side, his hands, and his feet. Richard Rohr ofm says, “The true meaning of the raising of Jesus is that God will turn all our human crucifixions into resurrection.” We have a profoundly simple image in this Easter story, “Then he said to Thomas, ‘Put your finger here and see my hands’” (Jn 20:27). Jesus takes Thomas’ hand in his and invites him to put his hands in the wounds of Jesus’ body. Jesus shares our pain and suffering, holds us in our pain and suffering. Let Jesus take your hand and invite you to put your hand in his wounds. Now invite Jesus to take your hand so that you can put his hand in your wounds.

Our third set of days happen after Ascension and Pentecost when Jesus is no longer physically visible on Earth. Now the Spirit has come among the believers, and the church is born. As our short reading this morning from Acts shows, one mark of that first church is its presence in community, not in one or two persons, but in a whole community visibly meeting together, “they were all together in Solomon’s Portico” (Acts 5:12). The second mark was their ministry of reconciliation, of repairing the rupture, of healing the sick and those with tormented with unclean spirits (Acts 5:16).

The final day is set many years after Pentecost when the church has grown beyond Judah and Jewish members to the Gentiles as far as Greece. Writing from the island of Patmos (in Greece although close to Asia Minor or today’s Turkey), John speaks about the persecution and ongoing suffering of the Christians in that community. once again it is happening on the first day of the week, now called “the Lord’s Day” (Rev 1:10). The one like the Son of Man speaks to him, “But he placed his right hand on me, saying, ‘Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, and the living one’” (Rev 1:17-18). Note the echo of the encounter between Thomas and Jesus, “he placed his right hand on me,” and the word, “Do not be afraid”, echoing the encounters between Jesus and the disciples.

Finally, we have the image of the Risen Jesus as the first and the last, repeating the previous two references to Jesus as “the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end” (Rev 1:8, 11). This is also an image of the Cosmic Christ who has been there from the beginning before the first incarnation, the creation of the universe. And now comes the promise that Jesus the Christ will be there until the end of the universe and the end of time. This is the third learning of the Resurrection, that Jesus now raised from the dead is alive forever. In Jesus, we too have life forever, “Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name” (Jn 20:31).



And, so, we end our reflections this morning with a prayer-poem from [Thom Shuman](#), thanking God the creator, Jesus Christ the faithful witness, and the Spirit, breath of peace.

Holy God, Lover of your children:
the tomb has been opened, and we dance into your future.
Your life has dawned on us, and we surround you with our praise.
You reach out your hand, and lead us into joy.

Jesus Christ, Faithful Witness:
you pick open the locked doors of our hearts
and come in to be with us forever.
You breathe peace into our souls, so we may bring healing to a troubled world.

Holy Spirit, Breath of Peace:
you show us our hearts, so we may give love to others.
You show us our hands, sending us to serve the needy.
You show us your hope, so we may live in your joy.

God in Community, Holy in One, who is, who was, and who is to come.

Island of Patmos

