

## REFLECTIONS FOR THE SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER ~ 16 April 2023

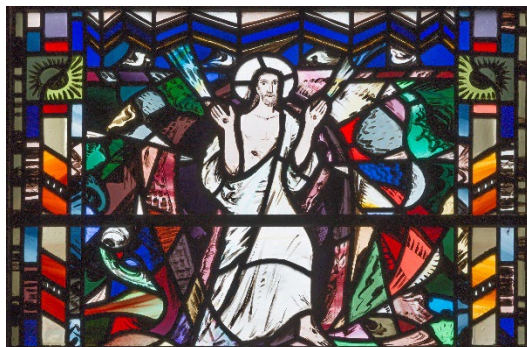
### The Mount ~ The Residence at Littledale

"This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it" – today's Psalm 118 says so succinctly and so reflectively that each day is gift, gift from our creating God, gift for which we give thanks. This is especially true in these holy days of Eastertime. It truly is "marvellous in our eyes" (Ps 118:23).

This Sunday marks the eighth day after Easter Sunday. The Lutheran pastor, Gordon W. Lathrop, tells us that the eighth day is not incidental timing, "Christians have met 'eight days later' (John 20:26) down through the ages. That meeting has always meant for them the encounter with the risen one and so with the end of death and the endless cycles of loss. To encounter Christ risen is to encounter God's spirit and God's mercy, things that have been promised for the last day when God's dwelling is to be with humankind and tears are to be wiped away. Christians believe the eighth-day meeting is already the dawning of that day. The eighth day is the beginning of a new creation."

In a moment of new awareness for me, I recently read Richard Rohr's words that speak to the connection between creation and resurrection:

Resurrection is a pattern of creation that has always been true. Resurrection and renewal are, in



**Resurrection, Charles Blakeman**

fact, the universal and observable pattern of everything. We might just as well use non-religious terms like "springtime," "regeneration," "healing," "forgiveness," "life cycles," "darkness," and "light." If incarnation is real, and Spirit has inhabited matter from the beginning, then resurrection in multitudinous forms is to be fully expected. We should not be surprised that the word we translate from the Greek as *Christ* comes from the Hebrew word *mashiach*, which means "the anointed one," or Messiah. Jesus the Christ reveals that all is anointed! Resurrection is just incarnation taken to its

logical conclusion.

"Resurrection is just incarnation taken to its logical conclusion." Incarnation, first in the creation of the cosmos and then in the coming of Jesus the Christ, carries with it the richness of created beings and the woundedness of created beings. In his appearance to the fearful disciples in the Upper Room, Jesus makes himself known by showing them his hands and his side (Jn 20:20). Before and after he did so, he speaks the same calming, consoling hope-filled words, "Peace be with you" (Jn 20:19, 21). Does the peace come from knowing that their beloved Jesus is now the Risen One? Does the peace come from knowing that their beloved Jesus continues to share their pain and suffering, continues to understand their woundedness, continues to show that in their woundedness is their hope? We remember the words scribbled on a piece of paper and smuggled from Dietrich Bonhoeffer's cell a short time before his death, "Only a suffering God can help."

The spiritual writer, Jan Richardson, expresses this so beautifully:

**Forces of nature, Andrew Ostrovsky**

Being in the world and loving one another – even from our most intact, integrated places, much less our less-intact ones – exposes us to wounding, to the giving and receiving of pain. Christ's wounds exemplify this. They underscore the depth of his willingness to enter into our loving in all its hurt and hope and capacity for going horribly wrong. In wearing his wounds – even in his resurrection – he confronts us with our own and calls us to move through them into new life. Christ beckons us not to seek out our wounding, because that will come readily enough in living



humanly in the world, but rather to allow our wounds to draw us together for healing within and beyond the body of Christ, and for an end to the daily crucifixions that happen through all forms of violence. The crucified Christ challenges us to discern how our wounds will serve as doorways that lead us through our own pain and into a deeper relationship with the wounded world and with the Christ who is about the business of resurrection, for whom the wounds did not have the final word.

Jesus will repeat the words, “Peace be with you,” a third time in this short passage from John. One of the Twelve, Thomas, was not present on Easter day with the other disciples. We know Thomas from earlier passages in the Gospels – he is named whenever the Twelve are listed. Thomas is the only one of the disciples to say that he will accompany Jesus to Bethany where Lazarus has died, even though they all know it is a high risk for them, “Thomas, who was called the Twin, said to his fellow-disciples, ‘Let us also go, that we may die with him’” (Jn 11:14-16). Thomas is also the disciple who, at the Last Supper, challenged Jesus with the words, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?” (Jn 14.4-5). He was a faithful, courageous follower of Jesus and was certainly heartbroken at the death of his beloved Teacher.

Little wonder that Thomas could not accept without question the story of the other followers who, even though they had seen the wounds of Jesus and had spoken with him, were still in the Upper



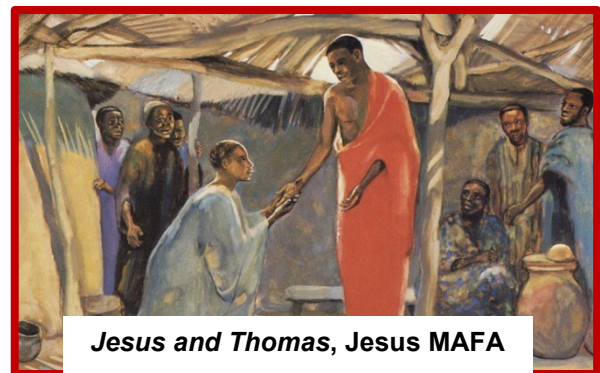
Room eight days later, not confident enough to leave. He exemplifies what Rainier Maria Rilke speaks to in his *Letters to a Young Poet*: “Try to love the questions themselves as if they were locked rooms or books written in a very foreign language. Don't search for the answers, which could not be given to you now, because you would not be able to live with them. And the point is to live everything. Live the questions now.” To name this faithful one, the “Doubting Thomas,” is to do him a great disservice. In Jan Richardson's words, “As Thomas reaches toward Christ, as he places his hand within the wound that Christ still bears, he is not merely grasping for concrete proof of the resurrection. He is entering into the very mystery of Christ, crossing into a new world that even now he can hardly see yet dares to move toward with the courage he has

previously displayed.”

Thomas is every one of us Christ-followers who did not personally see Jesus immediately after his resurrection. In the words at the end of today's Gospel narrative, the writer of the Gospel says so when he notes, "these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God" (Jn 20:31). For Thomas, faith comes on the following Sunday when he hears the words of the Risen One addressing him personally. For those who come after, faith comes through hearing the Word of God, through hearing the Risen One speak through his apostolic messengers, human and other-than-human (do not forget that this coming Saturday is Earth Day, when we thank our God for the heavens and the firmament who proclaim God's handiwork – see Psalm 19).

In his poem "St. Thomas the Apostle," the British theologian, Malcolm Guite, speaks to the Thomas who is the faithful follower, not the doubtful one (note especially last two lines):

"We do not know . . . how can we know the way?"  
 Courageous master of the awkward question,  
 You spoke the words the others dared not say  
 And cut through their evasion and abstraction.  
 O doubting Thomas, father of my faith,  
 You put your finger on the nub of things:  
 We cannot love some disembodied wraith,  
 But flesh and blood must be our king of kings.  
 Your teaching is to touch, embrace, anoint,  
 Feel after him and find him in the flesh.  
 Because he loved your awkward counter-point,  
 The Word has heard and granted you your wish.  
*O place my hands with yours, help me divine  
 The wounded God whose wounds are healing  
 mine.*



The members of the first community who follow the way begun by Thomas and the other disciples in the Upper Room and who become the bearers of the tradition that comes down to us today are described in our reading from the Acts of the Apostles, "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. . . All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple,



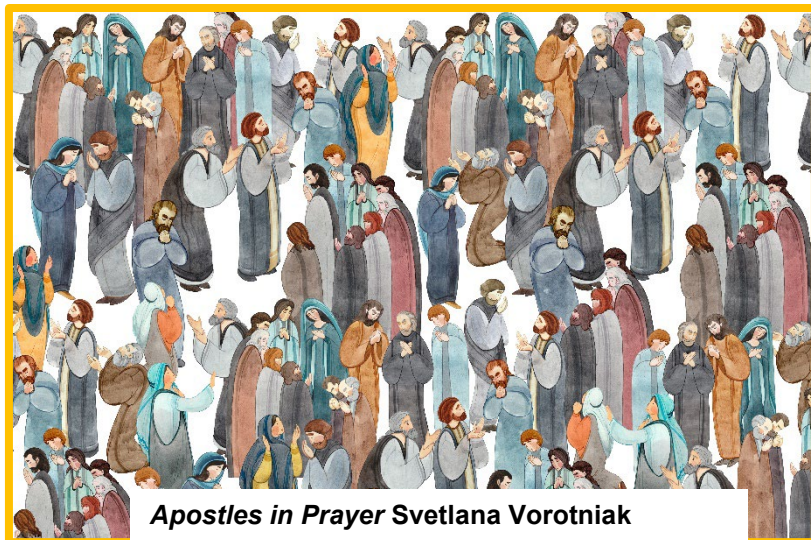
they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts" (Acts 1:42, 22, 46). Dennis Hamm sj gives further detail to this description, "The apostolic 'teaching' would, no doubt, include the sayings of Jesus and the interpretations of his life by way of texts from the Hebrew Scriptures. The 'communal life' includes the generous sharing of possessions mentioned later in this description. The 'breaking of the bread' seems to be, as in the Emmaus account in Luke's Gospel (Luke 24), the celebration of the Lord's Supper." The Presbyterian theologian and pastor, Thom Shuman, describes what it means for us to be that Christian community today:



When we are blinded by anger, you pour out your love for all to see;  
when we wonder what tomorrow will bring, you call us to trust in you;  
when sadness fills our lives, you plant gladness in our hearts.  
God of Easter: touch us with your grace.

You show us your hands, so we may reach out to mend the broken;  
you show us your feet, so we may walk with those the world passes by;  
you show us your face, so we may know what our sisters and brothers look like.  
Risen Christ: touch us with your compassion.

You open our eyes, so we may see God's love;  
you open our minds, so we may welcome God's Word;  
you open our lips, so we may be God's witnesses.  
Spirit of Hope: touch us with your peace.  
God in Community, Holy in One, open us to your presence.



At this time in your life, which specific prayer in this prayer-poem has special meaning for you?  
Let each one of us contemplatively answer that question as we remember Father Philip Chircop's poem from last Sunday's reflection:

Invited, curious like a little child,  
we place our trembling hands  
not only on your wounds but on ours too,  
and on the lovely brokenness of others,  
breathing in, forgiveness; breathing out, forgiveness  
wounds becoming the sacred place of mutual compassion,  
and the springboard to an intimate song of communion and possibility  
crafted in the heart: 'our Lord, and our God.'