

OUR LADY, STAR OF THE SEA, WEYMOUTH

HOMILY FOR THE 2nd SUNDAY IN EASTERTIDE (A)

23rd APRIL 2017

They went as a body every day to the Temple but met in their houses for the breaking of bread.....Good to see you, if someone you know is missing, quote this passage from Acts to them and ask how you can encourage and help them come every week.....the disciples met every day but I don't wish to burden anyone! (although there are prayer meetings, bible sharing groups and more that are calling you all to join them). But truly, look to see who sometimes sits near you but isn't here today, go and talk to them. Jesus said to his disciples, as the Father sent me, so I am sending you. Today, he is talking to (me and) you!

Do you need encouragement? Well, what an amazing promise we heard. Did you hear it? I shall read it from the lectionary for you because it is one of those Scriptures we could do with knowing by heart. "Blessed be God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who in his great mercy has given us a new birth as his sons (and daughters), by raising Jesus Christ from the dead, so that we have a sure hope and the promise of an inheritance that can never be spoilt or soiled and never fade away, because it is being kept for you in the heavens."

What a perfect Scripture to hear on Divine mercy Sunday....

You see, it's easy to be a person of faith when all is going well; when the worst that happens is minor illnesses, or perhaps even the death of elderly parents. But when a crisis tears at our hearts; a young spouse dies, a child goes missing, a marriage is on the rocks – then we often feel our faith failing, we feel anger and doubt.

When the disciples were with Jesus when he spoke, healed people, performed miracles, it was easy for them to believe in him. Much harder when he was killed; he seemed absent. All the disciples in their own way suffered the crisis of the crucifixion. If we look to Thomas, since he is named in John's Gospel, think how his faith waned. He ran and hid; he didn't remember Jesus' promises. Do we remember his promises (see our 2nd reading again from Peter?)

Anyway, when Thomas saw Jesus, he believed. And Jesus talked of a greater faith; he was looking down the ages; he looked at you and me and said to us "blessed are those who have not seen yet believe".

When we suffer a crisis, it's wonderful when it's resolved. But how much deeper is our faith when we hold onto the Lord Jesus when our prayers seem not to be answered, when God seems absent. Last Sunday we were called to believe the resurrection; yet recall the Gospel,

the first act of belief of the disciples was when they saw the empty tomb. When we feel empty, God is absent, these are times we especially need to recognise Jesus is alive. As with the disciples, very often the experience of the risen Jesus in our lives comes later.

Think of a young husband whose wife dies. He is devastated, gets angry with God. "How could you let this happen?" He forgets God doesn't cause bad things. In fact God cries with us; we saw that with Jesus crying with Mary and Martha when Lazarus died. But in time the husband recognises God is present in the bad as well as the good times. His faith is now based not just on good experiences but on his active choice to believe during his crisis.

Let's not persecute ourselves, doubting is human. However, after Jesus' death Thomas made a mistake; he withdrew from the other disciples. During his time of trial/crisis he sought loneliness rather than fellowship. (I can relate to this from personal experience as well; it was the wrong choice). Thomas doubted the women and the other disciples. When he took the courage to re-join them, Jesus made his real presence known. And Thomas believed.

"Happy are you who believe who haven't seen". Jesus is offering you and me new life in his Holy Spirit so that we may know him personally and walk in this new way of life, through the power of his resurrection.

Whether life is good for you at the moment and you're experiencing the resurrection, or it's tough and you're looking at the empty tomb, remember John's Gospel states that there were many other signs that Jesus worked that are not recorded. Those that are, are recorded so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and believing this you may have life in this name; and hence the sure hope of an inheritance in heaven.

Elsewhere in Acts of the Apostles it says, and I am paraphrasing, "if you confess with your mouth and believe in your heart that Jesus is Lord, and God raised him from the dead, you will be saved".

We say this every week; so if we also believe it in our hearts we have an eternal future; one that is being kept safe and perfect for us in heaven. Believe, with whatever amount of faith you have, what you are about to say in the Creed. Then whether you are currently on top of the world or in the valley of crisis, you will still experience the mysterious joy of the resurrection. And remember, it is Jesus, not me, who is sending you to share this.

May God place this joy into hearts; here and now.

Rev Jonathan de Kretser