

Second Sunday of Easter

[Reading I: Acts 2:42-47](#)

[Responsorial Psalm: 118:2-4, 13-15, 22-24](#)

[Reading II: 1 Peter 1:3-9](#)

[Gospel: John 20:19-31](#)

Readings may be found on the US Bishop's website:
<https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/041623.cfm>



Caravaggio ca 1601-1602
The Incredulity of St Thomas

The readings for the Cycle A Easter season, have selections from the Acts of the Apostles, the First Letter of Peter, and selections from the Gospel of John except for the Third Sunday and Ascension Sunday.

The selection from the Acts of the Apostles offers an image of the Christian life that results from the resurrection of Christ. The new life was not simply a personal experience but had a social and communal impact. Verse 42 describes the foundation of the Christian community. Attention was given to the Apostles' instruction. They had been the eyewitnesses to Jesus' life and teaching. It is through them that the authentic message continues.

Secondly, there is a shared life. Christ has shared life with us and so we are called to share life with one another. While it did not become law in the Church, it has become a principle of solidarity in which we each have a concern for all other members of the Body of Christ. This is expressed in prayer for one another, volunteering our time and energy to help others, and contributing donations to causes.

Thirdly, the breaking of bread became a ritual expression of the Christian identity. It is uncertain if the reference has a singular focus on the Eucharist (the term is found in Luke 24 which we will read next week) or a broader reference to the life and vitality that was experienced in common meals in the early community and in the persecution from the outside. Either way, they came to experience nurturing, vitality, and joy in gathering.

Fourthly, prayer was a central focus of the early Christians. To be a part of the community, one knew the source of life as God and that this life was strengthened and renewed by connecting with God. In Judaism, the great focus was on obedience to the law that God had given. In the new life of the Risen Christ, the focus was on relating with God in Christ, who was accessible to each person and who invited us into an ever-deeper relationship. This is one of the unique qualities of Christianity that distinguishes it from other religious traditions.

Jesus is still present in the community through those who are being added to the community each day, through those who are living a new way of life, and through the breaking of the bread.

The second reading from St Peter is considered by scholars to be a baptismal homily that was given to help the newly baptized understand their new identity as Christians. While the author has "seen" the risen Lord, the newly baptized have not "seen" Christ but come to know Christ through the testimony and life witness of others. This same theme is picked up in the Gospel today. The community also shares in the suffering of Christ. Their newness of life should reassure them that they have, like Christ, something even greater awaiting them.

The Gospel recounts Jesus' appearance to the disciples on Easter night, declaring peace to them, conveying the Holy Spirit to them, and authorizing them to forgive sins. (This Sunday is also referred to as Divine Mercy Sunday because of this commission.) The

Gospel also presents Jesus appearing a second time to the apostles a week later, and this time Thomas is present. (This Sunday also has been called Doubting Thomas Sunday.) John's original audience was struggling with where Jesus was. Jesus is present to them through the Spirit and the continuation of his ministry.

The forgiveness of sins is also another unique aspect of Christianity. Other traditions have prescribed activities or rituals that will earn a person forgiveness. Christianity sees forgiveness as a gift. It is God's gift to us that cannot be earned. It is a gift, and all we need to do is accept it. Through Christ's words to the apostles, the Church is empowered to offer this gift to everyone who desires it. God's great mercy is unlimited.

Thomas' desire to see Christ and place his fingers in the nail marks, raises the issue that people have asked in every age. Unless I can see, I will not believe. But even seeing does not always produce faith. The Jewish leaders who rejected the miracle of the man born blind saw someone who was blind and could now see, but that did not bring them to faith. Thomas comes to faith when Jesus addresses him. The Word of God came into his mind and heart, and he believed.

Themes

Resurrection

Christian Community

Jesus' Presence today

Forgiveness

Reflection Questions:

What are the central aspects of Christianity that strike you in your experience of the Church today? Are any of the items in the Acts of the Apostles part of your list?

How has your experience of God changed in prayer? Have you experienced a connection with God in prayer?

When do you experience life and vitality in your life? Do you recognize God present in these moments? (St Ignatius of Loyola recommends looking for God in your experiences of life that lead to wholeness, and connectedness with others.)

The risen Lord became real to Mary Magdalene and Thomas when He spoke to them. How have you heard the Lord in your life? In which scriptures, did the voice of Christ speak to you or touch your spirit?

Prayer:

For the Church: that we may learn to listen together to the promptings of the Spirit so that we may offer a convincing witness to all who are seeking a direction in life

For a spirit of reverence: that as we break the bread and share the cup, we may recognize more fully the Risen Lord in our midst

For all who struggle with faith: that the Word of God may liberate their hearts, open them to a relationship with God, and enlighten their path to a fuller life

For the grace to forgive: that having experienced God's forgiveness, we may forgive those who have misjudged or wronged us

For all who are frightened: that they may find Christ present with them in their fear and allow Christ to lead them into the light of God's love