

# Reflection for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Easter, Cycle A

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The readings for this Sunday can be found at <http://usccb.org/bible/readings/041920.cfm>.

## **1st Reading:** *Acts 2:42–47*

Acts of the Apostles is like an idealized history of the early Church. In today's selection we get a glimpse of what life was like being a Christian in those first days. You'll hear in it all the elements of the Mass; community, the teaching, the prayers and the breaking of the bread. Luke seems to equate the common meal with the Eucharistic meal and in the early Churches they may have oftentimes occurred together.

## **2nd Reading:** *1 Peter 1:3–9*

This letter has been attributed to Peter since the early days of the Church but know, because it is written in such good Greek, many scholars believe he may have dictated it to someone who would use a more polished Greek than the fisherman. It seems to have been written in the mid 60's during the persecution of Nero; you'll hear the remark about present suffering at the end of the selection. Its purpose seems to be to console and strengthen the hearers. He tells them that in the midst of their suffering they should rejoice. You'll hear it at the end of the selection: "you rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy, as you attain the goal of [your] faith, the salvation of your souls."

## **Gospel:** *John 20:19–31*

**As the Father has sent me, so I send you." 22 And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the holy Spirit.** Jn 20:21-22

This is the commissioning in John's Gospel account. It has the same elements of the "Great Commission" of Matthew's Gospel, the disciples are sent to do a job, and they are given the power to do it by the giving of the Holy Spirit.

In Matthew they are given the task of making disciples and he empowers them by telling them that He will continue to be with them (Mt 28:19-20). In Mark's Gospel they are simply told to go into the whole world and proclaim the Gospel (good news) to every creature (Mk 16:15). Mark doesn't relate here that the Holy Spirit will guide their proclamation, but he already told them that the Spirit will give them the words to say (Mk 13:11). In the Gospel of Luke, the disciples are told that they are witnesses of how Jesus fulfilled the promises of the Hebrew Scriptures and were told to wait in Jerusalem for the power from on high, the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (Luke 24:48-49).

In John's Gospel, the job we are given is to bring God's forgiveness to the world. I know, it also says that we can retain sins, but what do you think God wants. It seems to me that people retain their own sins and our job is to show them the way out of that.

The Gospels, all four, are clear: we have a job to do and God will give us the tools to do it.

Why is the story of Thomas interwoven into the story of the commissioning? I think it is to demonstrate that God will give us whatever we need to empower us to be his missionaries. He is not a God who sits back and expects us to come to him. He seeks us out and relates to us wherever we are. And, God's power is found in the community, the community we call Church.

I'm on the side of the Scripture scholars who say this story is an indication that the early Church gathered every Sunday. And, I believe the elements found in this story are found in our Sunday gatherings. We come to gather in support of each other, Jesus comes and makes himself present to us, he relates to us as individuals in the community; and, his interaction with us empowers us to carry out the commission he has given us.

Oh, and for those searching for purpose in life, this is the ultimate purpose. We were created for relationship and we were created for meaningful, fruitful, relationship. If, in our relationships, we carry out the mission Jesus gave us, our own lives are enriched and we experience the fullness of life, as much as we can on earth. The mission, by-the-way, can be stated in several different ways but the way that is most meaningful to me is to say our job is to bring God's love to the small moments or our day-to-day lives. This fulfills the commission as it is stated in each of the Gospels; God's love for us is the good news.

### **Reflection:**

[Jesus] said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained." Jn 20:21-23

### **Question:**

What words or phrases jumped out at you during the Liturgy of the Word on Sunday? What connection do those words or phrases have to your day-to-day life? (Why do you think they jumped out at you?) What might God be trying to say to you through these words or phrases? What response should you make? What action should you take?

### **Alternative:**

Share about/reflect upon what you think is the primary message of the Gospel. How do you live your life in a manner that shows you believe this? What do you need to let go of, in your life, to live what you believe more perfectly? How can you better proclaim this Gospel by the manner in which you live your life?

## Verse by Verse:

Jn 20:19 "On the evening of that first day of the week...: | The day He rose from the dead.

Jn 20:19 "...when the doors were locked..." | Jesus resurrected body is not constrained by the physical - locked doors.

Jn 20:20 "...he showed them his hands and his side." | He showed them that it truly was him. In Lk 24:39 Jesus has the disciple touch him to see that he is not a ghost. Also, note that in Luke, he shows them his hands and his feet which coincides with Psalm 22:17.

Jn 20:21 "...so I send you." | This is the commissioning. The disciples now officially become apostles, which literally means ones sent.

Jn 20:22 "And when he had said this..." | This phrase connects vs 22 with vs 21. The Spirit is given to give them the spiritual help necessary for them to complete the mission.

Jn 20:23 "Whose sins you shall forgive..." | The early Church didn't practice Sacramental Reconciliation the way we do. Jesus did not specify how this portion of the commission should be lived out. The Church worked it out over the centuries. The commission probably goes beyond Sacramental Reconciliation, though. We are all charge to forgive others.

Jn 20:25 "Unless I see... I will not believe." | This verse has given Thomas the title of "doubting Thomas". I don't know that that is quite fair given the devastation he must have felt losing the Lord whom he was willing to die with (see Jn 11:16).

Jn 20:26 "Now a week later..." | Scripture scholars point out that this gathering a week later, again, may point to the fact that the early Church began gathering weekly, on the Lord's Day from the beginning. Acts 20:7 says it directly.

Jn 20:28 "Thomas answered and said to him, 'My Lord and my God!'" | Thomas' answer clearly affirms Jesus as God which relates back to the beginning of John's Gospel, "...and the Word was God" (Jn 1:1). The closest pre-resurrection statement of this was Peter's confession of faith in Mt 16:16, "...you are the sone of the living God."

Jn 20:29 "Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed." | The Gospel is talking about physical sight here. We can certainly see, "experience", the risen Lord with our spirit, today.

Jn 20:31 "...you may have life in his name." | John concludes giving the purpose of his writing.