

EASTER 2
Acts 2:42-47
1Peter 1:3-9
John 20:19-31

In Tolkien's 'Lord of the Rings,' the members of the Fellowship were a mixed bunch with different views, but united in their determination to overcome the evil that was raging in Middle earth before it destroyed everything in its path. We see shades of this in the global efforts to control the spread of COVID 19.

The group huddled together in the Upper Room on Easter evening were also a disparate group. They were confused, afraid, leaderless and directionless. The risen Christ appeared to them and when he extended his peace to them they recognised who he was and they were overcome with joy. Jesus commissions them to be his agents, namely, to be his visible presence in the world by breathing on them as God breathed on Adam, filling the disciples with the Holy Spirit. This new life empowers the nascent Church to proclaim the good news of the resurrection and announce God's forgiveness to those who are open to receive God's mercy and love, so they too can live as Christ-like people. More than that, Jesus gave them authority to set the boundaries of the Church's belief and behaviour that has been revealed through him.

Today's gospel reading has given rise to our understanding of Divine Mercy. Pope Francis reminds us that during the night we see myriads of stars, rather like our sins. When the sun rises, its brightness hides the stars and God's mercy hides our sins. Divine Mercy does not dwell on the past, rather it looks forward to the future.

Thomas was not in the Upper Room on Easter evening and he doubted the news about Jesus being raised from the dead. Doubt is not always a bad thing because if at times we do not doubt, we don't question what we believe and why. Doubt can open the door to growth as it did for Thomas a week later in the same Upper Room.

Jesus didn't chastise Thomas for his doubt just as he didn't chastise Peter for his three-fold denial, or the disciples for not believing the women on Easter morning. Instead, Jesus invited Thomas to, 'Come and See.' Thomas could see and hear Jesus and even touch him if he chose to do so. This gave rise to Jesus' blessing on those who believe even though they can only experience the Risen Jesus sacramentally, through hearing of him *from* others and through seeing him and serving him *in* others. This is the mission to which Jesus has called his Church.

Our reading from the Acts gives us a glimpse of how the first disciples lived as people of the Resurrection. They shared their resources; they were faithful to the teaching of the apostles; they worshipped daily as a community in the Temple, and broke bread together in their homes. At this time we also endure limits on our ability to meet together to break bread together and celebrate Christ's death and resurrection. Yet modern technology enables us to pray the mass together from our own homes. We can hear the Scriptures together and make

our spiritual communion. It is not ideal, but Christians have always found a way to gather together with the One who promised he would be with us always.

St Paul and St James urge us to give thanks to God in all situations and St Peter says that our faith in the resurrection does not defend us *from* difficult times, but *in* them. In times of trial he says that only those who endure to the end prove themselves to be more precious than gold and so will be saved.

Our faith in the resurrection of Jesus and ultimately ourselves is the bedrock of our faith, so let us rejoice. Christ is Risen!

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