

Here's a text if you only have a minute ...

His love has no end.

Psalm Response

None of their members was ever in want.

First Reading

God has already overcome the world.

Second Reading

Peace be with you.

Gospel

Heavenly Father and God of mercy,
we no longer look for Jesus among the dead,
for he is alive and has become the Lord of Life.
From the waters of death you raise us up with him
and renew your gift of life within us.

Increase in our minds and hearts
the risen life we share with Christ
and help us to grow as your people
towards the fullness of eternal life with you.

Old Opening Prayer

This week's texts if you'd like to reflect further:
Acts 4: 32–35; Psalm 117 (118); 1 John 5: 1–6; John 20: 19–31.

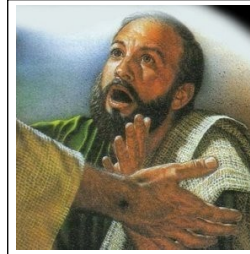
'Every believer in this world must become a spark of Christ's light'
(Pope St. John XXIII)



James Tissot, *The Appearance of Christ at the Cenacle* (public domain)

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ST BEUNO'S OUTREACH IN THE DIOCESE OF WREXHAM



Second Sunday of Easter (Divine Mercy Sunday)

Year B, 7th April 2024

'My Lord and my God!'

On this Second Sunday of Easter, the readings invite us to believe and trust God's mercy. According to the ways of the world, mercy does not really make sense, but this is the very faith Paul speaks of as that which 'conquers the world': forgiveness begets forgiveness, mercy begets mercy, love begets love (**Second Reading**). Our need for, and joy in, such graces is echoed in the **Psalm**, where we can join with the psalmist in saying: 'Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; for his mercy endures forever!'

The Acts of the Apostles (**First Reading**) shows that the mercy of the risen Lord continues to be poured out through the ministry of his apostles, while in the **Gospel** we see Jesus himself being the model for mercy for his fearful and doubtful friends.

The US journalist Cathleen Falsani wrote: 'justice is getting what you deserve; mercy is not getting what you deserve; grace is getting what you don't deserve.' This coming week, let's pray that, though completely underserving of such a gift of grace, God's divine mercy will have its effect in us, freeing and opening us to love ever more deeply.



Opening Prayer

God of everlasting mercy,
who in the very recurrence of the paschal feast
kindle the faith of the people you have made your own,
increase, we pray, the grace you have bestowed,
that all may grasp and rightly understand
in what font they have been washed,
by whose Spirit they have been reborn,
by whose Blood they have been redeemed.

Second Reading 1 John 5: 1–6

Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ has been begotten by God; and whoever loves the Father that begot us, loves the child whom God begets. We can be sure that we love God's children if we love God himself, and do what he has commanded us. This is what loving God is – keeping his commandments. And his commandments are not difficult, because anyone who has been begotten by God has already overcome the world. This is the victory over the world – our faith. Who can overcome the world? Only the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God; Jesus Christ who came by water and blood, not with water only, but with water and blood; with the Spirit as another witness – since the Spirit is truth.

How am I feeling as I come before the Lord in prayer? I take my time to settle, to become still, as I bring my true self to this time of prayer. Whatever is going on in my life now, I ask the Holy Spirit to help me believe that God is already victorious.

I read this letter from St John carefully, slowly, taking great care to notice what I am hearing, and how it is touching me. I pause whenever I feel moved to.

I might be drawn to the word *belief*. Considering today's Gospel, does this word challenge me? Do I presently identify more closely with faith or with doubt? How does this leave me feeling?

Love is mentioned more than belief here. Is this how I more readily show my faith, my belief, by loving?

Do I feel Christ's Spirit helping me to love and to receive love?

Do I trust this witness to his victory over the world, my world?

I spend some time in the company of the Spirit of truth. I rest in God's love for me. I savour, with Christ, the joy of his Easter victory.

I speak to the Lord from the heart, if so moved, before ending with *Glory be ...*

Gospel John 20: 19–31 (abbreviated)

In the evening of that same day, the first day of the week, the doors were closed in the room where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews. Jesus came and stood amongst them. He said to them, 'Peace be with you,' and showed them his hands and his side. The disciples were filled with joy when they saw the Lord, and he said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father send me, so I am sending you.' After saying this he breathed on them and said: 'Receive the Holy Spirit. For whose sins you forgive, they are forgiven; for those whose sins you retain, they are retained.'

Thomas, called the Twin, who was one of the Twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. When the disciples said, 'We have seen the Lord,' he answered, 'Unless I see the holes that the nails made in his hands, and unless I can put my hand into his side, I refuse to believe.'

Eight days later the disciples were in the house again and Thomas was with them. The doors were closed, but Jesus came in and stood among them. 'Peace be with you,' he said. Then he spoke to Thomas, 'Put your finger here; look, here are my hands. Give me your hand; put it into my side. Doubt no longer but believe.' Thomas replied, 'My Lord and my God!' Jesus said to him: 'You believe because you can see me. Happy are those who have not seen and yet believe.'

This Gospel lends itself to being prayed imaginatively. So, I read and re-read the text, before composing the details of the scene. I see myself moving through the gloomy darkness of the room to push at the heavily bolted doors. I taste the atmosphere of fear – the disciples were the targets of the authorities.

I might even sense the shame of the group – they had also let Jesus down badly. Do I notice how they avoid one another's glance?

I might like to continue to pray in this way, lingering in any places that move me; Jesus appearing, speaking words of peace, showing his wounds, breathing on the gathered group. I might move to the account of Thomas's uncompromising honesty, and to Jesus's later appearance.

What do I notice about Thomas, or about Jesus's sensitivity?

How am I responding to the events of the Gospel? Is Jesus saying something to me? 'As the Father sent me, so am I sending you,' perhaps? How do I feel?

I remain with the Lord, in a quiet corner of the Upper Room. We are alone.

Do I want to bring something to him now – a struggle, a weakness, an uncertainty, a conviction? Perhaps I end echoing the words of the believer: 'My Lord and my God!'