

Homily

19th April 2020 – 2nd Sunday of Easter

Dear friends we continue our Easter celebrations this weekend and in today's Gospel from John we hear how Jesus appears to the disciples following the Resurrection.

"Peace be with you," are the first words spoken by Jesus to the disciples and in the Gospel three times we hear Jesus say these four words to them. I think that to have peace and to be at peace is so important in our lives, how much we need peace, now more than ever. The peace that Jesus speaks of is not an earthly peace, it is a divine, heavenly peace that is given to us as gift from the Risen Lord. On this Easter Day Jesus says to us **"Peace be with you,"** let's receive and accept that Easter peace that only Jesus can give.

In the Gospel we meet Thomas who is a personal favourite of mine. For some reason Thomas was not with the other disciples on the first occasion when Jesus appears to them and he refuses to believe when they tell him that they have seen the Lord and that he has appeared to them. *"Unless I see the holes that the nails made in his hands and can put my finger into the holes that they made, and unless I can put my hand into his side, I refuse to believe"* says Thomas.

We hear that eight days later Jesus appears to them again and this time Thomas was with them. On this occasion Jesus gives him the evidence that he needs, Jesus allows Thomas to put his finger into the wounds in his hands and put his hand into his side. **"Doubt no longer but believe"** says Jesus and in response Thomas makes that wonderful profession of faith, *"My Lord and my God."* His disbelief has now turned into belief, the one who doubted, doubts no longer and Jesus says to him **"You believe because you can see me. Happy are those who have not seen and yet believe."**

Like Thomas, it's only natural for us to have doubts at times in our lives, we are all worried about the current health crisis and last weekend I talked a little about the uncertainty of our fragile world. However, Jesus is the one who gives us the certainty that we need at this time, Jesus is the one that gives us the hope, strength and courage that we need in times of doubt and struggle, particularly at this time as we battle COVID-19. No matter what happens to us **Jesus** is the constant, the one who **is, and will always be, there for us** and Jesus is the one who helps us make sense of all that is happening in our world at the moment.

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Easter is the time when we celebrate the Resurrection, Jesus as Lord, Jesus as the Christ the Son of God who has risen from the dead, winning that great victory over sin and death, so that we might believe and have life through him. As we continue our Easter celebration of the Resurrection, let's take Thomas as our model and join in his great profession of faith, '*My Lord and My God,*' we pray that our faith will be strong and like Thomas we will doubt no longer but believe.

"Peace be with you," says Jesus to us today, let's open our hearts and minds to him and accept that Easter peace that only he can give and in our turn let's try and share that peace with others, particularly those who have no hope and those who are struggling and finding life difficult at the moment.

We are called to be an Easter people of love and peace and alleluia is the song that we sing, we pray that our faith may continue to remain strong.

May God be with you and bless you and your families.

Please be assured of my daily prayers for you and I am very much looking forward to that day when we can return to our beautiful Church and be gathered again to celebrate the Eucharist together.

Sending you my love, **Fr Phil.**

One final thought - I was very moved on Thursday evening standing outside my house with all my neighbours clapping in acknowledgment of the amazing job that the NHS and so many other keyworkers are doing at the moment in the midst of the current health crisis. It is really important for us to acknowledge their efforts and say thank you to them, we can do that each week with this small gesture.

I think that this is a time when we are able to reflect on all the good things that we have in our lives that so often we can take for granted, we are truly blessed!

Have a good week.

Bidding Prayers and Spiritual Communion

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On this Easter Day the Risen Lord offers us his gift of peace and through him we offer our prayers to the Father.

For the Church throughout the world; may she always be filled with the Risen Life of Christ and proclaim the love that drives out all fear. Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

That the Risen Lord may enlighten the minds of government leaders; may they make wise decisions for the common good, caring always for the most needy and vulnerable. Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

For those who are sick, especially those affected by the coronavirus; may they know the grace and healing of God our loving Father. Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

For the families of those who have died recently and those who are sick; may they experience the peace and comfort of the Risen Lord Jesus who gives the hope, courage and strength that they need. Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

For all our medical staff, emergency services and key workers; may they be granted health and strength in their continued generous service of their sisters and brothers. Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

For ourselves; may we experience the gift of peace in our hearts and lives that the Risen Lord offers to each one of us. Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

For all the faithful departed, especially **Alan Lockwood, Margaret O'Hanlon, Jim Nolan, James Milner and Martha McGuinness: "Eternal rest..."**

We ask Mary, Our Mother, to intercede for us as we pray: **"Hail Mary..."**

Loving Father,
Listen to the prayers that we offer to you in faith and in trust.
Help us grow in love for you and your Son Jesus,
the Risen Christ Our Lord, Amen.

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Spiritual Communion

Prayer of St Alphonsus

My Jesus,

I believe that you are present in this Holy Sacrament of the altar.

I love you above all things and

I passionately desire to receive you into my soul.

Since I cannot now receive you sacramentally,

come spiritually into my soul

so that I may unite myself wholly to you now and forever.

Amen.