

## THE SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER – A

This is the octave day of Easter and each day of the past seven days have been celebrated by the Church as Easter Day in her liturgy. In the gospel reading the disciples receive the Holy Spirit and the authority to forgive sins then Thomas professes his belief in Jesus with his confession, 'My Lord and my God.' In the first reading we continue reading from Acts of the Apostles and listen to an account of life within an early Christian community. In the second reading Peter teaches that although we are filled with a joy so glorious because Christ is risen yet our faith will be tested.

The **First Reading** is from Acts of the Apostles. This New Testament book is part two of a history of the rise of Christianity, the first part being the gospel according to Luke. They became separated when, about 150 A.D., Christians wanted the four gospel accounts bound together in one volume. The author, Luke, is a Syrian from Antioch, a doctor of non-Jewish origin, who was a close friend of Paul accompanying him on his second and third missionary journeys. Luke collected a great deal of evidence from a variety of sources which he edited. The book deals with the primitive Jerusalem community under Peter's leadership, the spread of Christianity to Samaria, to the gentile peoples and the early days of Christianity in Antioch. From chapter 13 Luke deals with Paul's three missionary journeys and ends with Paul a prisoner in Rome.

The reading, 2.42-27, is a description of the growth in the life of the early Christian community in Jerusalem. We are told this early community remained faithful to the instruction they had received, faithful to the brotherhood of the community, faithful to the Eucharist and faithful to community prayer. Everyone was filled with awe and fear when they saw the miracles worked through the power of Jesus. Their unity in faith made them one family and they shared out equally their possessions. They continued in regular Temple worship but met in their own homes for the celebration of the Eucharist just as Jesus celebrated that first Eucharist in someone's home. The Eucharist is to replace Temple worship. They continued joyfully their community life sharing with each other and praising God. They gave witness to their faith and the Lord added daily to their number. Today we proclaim with joy the new life lived by the early Christian community.

The **Responsorial Psalm**, Psalm 117.2-4,13-15, 22-24, is one of the Hallel Psalms (Ps.113-118) which the Israelites recited at great feasts including the Passover Supper. They are songs in praise of God. Psalm 117 is a psalm of thanksgiving and may have been sung as a procession entered the Temple during the feast of Tabernacles. For us the psalm is a perfect response to the resurrection of Jesus and the new life of the early Church: the love of the Lord has no end, he is my saviour who has won the victory, he is the foundation stone of all the Lord's work, a marvel and we rejoice and are glad.

The **Second Reading** is from the first letter of St Peter. There is doubt about the authorship of the Petrine letters because not a lot is known about Peter's latter years and though Peter's Greek in the letter is unsophisticated it is thought to be too accurate and fluent for a Galilean fisherman but the letters do give us a valuable summary of apostolic theology. The purpose of the letter is to help its readers' faith in time of trial. Their model is Christ and Christians must suffer patiently like him when trials come due to their faith and their saintly lives. In return for evil they must offer charity, they must give their obedience to the civil authority and show gentleness to all.

The reading, 1.3-9, assures us we have received a new birth as a result of the resurrection and our faith in God's power will guard each one of us until our salvation is revealed at the end of time. This doesn't mean we will not have to face trials, our faith will be tested, yet we are filled with a joy so glorious because we believe. We can be sure of the end to which our faith looks forward. Prepare the lesson carefully the sentences are long and it will not be easy to proclaim the revealed message.