

THE SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER – B

In the gospel we read 'In the evening of that same day, the first day of the week (i.e. after Peter and the other disciple had gone to the tomb and found it empty), the doors were closed in the room where the disciples were for fear of the Jews'. Jesus 'stood among them' and gave them his peace and empowered them with the Holy Spirit to forgive sins. Thomas is absent and when on the following Sunday Jesus comes again and Thomas is present, Jesus says to Thomas, 'Doubt no longer but believe,' words which are addressed to all of us. In the first reading there seems little place for doubt as we hear how the Church begins to grow and the apostles 'continued to testify to the resurrection.' In the second reading we hear that believing in God and lovingly fulfilling his commandments will enable us to overcome the world and so win our eternal salvation.

The **First Reading** is from the 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, was 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 and 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, 4.32-35, gives us a simple picture of the early Christian community, while the apostles continued to preach the resurrection of Jesus those who believed began living a communal life sharing what they possessed and making sure the poor were not neglected.

The **Responsorial Psalm**, Psalm 117.2-4,15-18,22-24, another of the six Hallel psalms, is a processional psalm chanted as the procession entered the Temple. For us the psalm recalls the triumph of the resurrection over sin and death. In the first verse God's faithful love, witnessed throughout the OT, is everlasting. In the second verse Jesus' resurrection has saved us from death and the third verse, Christ may be a stumbling block for unbelievers, but for us who believe 'the work of the Lord' is 'a marvel in our eyes.'

The **Second Reading** is from the first letter of St John. There are three letters attributed to John the first being the most important, possibly written at the same time as the gospel. This letter was written to the Christian communities of Asia (Turkey) because they were suffering near disintegration due to some early heresies which were afflicting the Church. In the introduction the writer says he wants to share what he has 'seen and heard', his experiences, with his readers. He picks out three main points 1. To live in the light of Christ and he lists four conditions to live such a life. 2. To live as God's children with three conditions necessary, and 3. He speaks of the source of love and faith. Love is from God so we must love, and faith in Christ Jesus is necessary to overcome the world. The letter ends with two supplementary points.

The reading, 5.1-6, comes from the section of the letter where the author is dealing with the source of love and faith. Whoever loves God loves his children because our love of God is expressed in loving our neighbour. By showing love for our neighbour we show that we love God which is the first commandment but love is based on faith, so the opening statement of the reading. By believing 'that Jesus is the Christ' we become children of God and capable of loving and this love enables us to keep God's commandments and thus overcome the world. Sent by God the Father we have faith in Jesus Christ 'who came by blood and water,' that is the blood and water that flowed from the side of Christ pierced by a lance as he hung dead on the cross. The blood shows that Jesus was truly sacrificed for the salvation of the world and the water, a symbol of the Holy Spirit, shows that the sacrifice is rich in grace. The reading concludes with the affirmation of the Spirit of Truth who gives witness to all Christ achieved.