

## SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER [B]

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Last week, on Holy Saturday evening at the Easter Vigil, hundreds of thousands of people around the world experienced the beginning of the resurrection to eternal life.

They were Baptised into Jesus: submerged under the waters of Baptism, to rise as new people – born again of water, and the Holy Spirit.

They celebrated for the first time, what we've celebrated for as many years as we've been a Christian: the fact that Jesus has risen from the dead.

Think about it for a moment.... What an amazing thing to believe – to know to be the absolute truth.

But, maybe for us, the wonder of it all has been lost because we've let it become submerged in us by the cares of this world.

This Jesus, whom Mary, His Mother, and John, the 'Beloved Disciple,' had seen die a horrible death on the Cross.

Not only was He: "Raised to life in the spirit." 1 Pt. 3: 18 but also raised with a real Resurrection body: and He appeared to people bodily.

To Peter who had denied Him; to Mary Magdalene as she wept by His empty tomb; to Thomas who doubted that He'd risen from the dead.

The first Easter was indeed a roller coaster ride of a day for the Disciples.

It started with disbelief; with fear, trembling, and bewilderment beside the empty tomb.

On the evening of that first Easter, the Disciples had locked themselves away because they were afraid.

Peter and John had seen the empty tomb, and believed. Mary Magdalene had seen the risen Jesus and: "Went to the disciples with the news, 'I have seen the Lord!'" Jn. 20: 19

And yet, the Disciples were scared: they were afraid, because they didn't want to end up on a cross for being followers of Jesus.

They believed the Lord had risen, although they could hardly comprehend it: and, I guess, they were also afraid, and feeling guilty because they hadn't stayed with Him to the bitter end of the Cross.

How wrong they were. How wrong we are in thinking that God wants us to be afraid of Him, because He: "Is so rich in mercy, and he loved us so much, that even though we were dead because of our sins, he gave us life when he raised Christ from the dead." Eph. 2: 4 – 5

At the Last Supper, Jesus had said to His Disciples:

"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid." Jn. 14: 27

Here He is to fulfil that promise. He stands among them, and says: "'Peace be with you!' and showed them his hands and his side." Jn. 20: 19 – 20

Each one of us longs for peace: peace for ourselves, and peace in the world.

But the peace the world gives is only the absence of conflict, or war.

The peace, which Jesus offers, is real, and everlasting.

Jesus, by giving His peace to the disciples; in breathing His Spirit into them, is making real, and present to them, the effects of the salvation He has bought for them with His life.

He redeemed them through His blood, shed on the Cross, and has flooded them with His mercy.

And, He shows them the depths of His mercy by showing them His hands, and His side.

And when they realise all of this, John says that they: "Were overjoyed when they saw the Lord." Jn. 20: 20

Thomas wasn't with them on that occasion; perhaps he was so upset, and overcome with grief he had to be by himself.

But a week later Jesus stands among them again, and Thomas is there this time. Again, He gives them His peace, and shows Thomas His hands and His side. But, perhaps because Thomas had been so grief-stricken, Jesus goes a step further by inviting him to touch the wounds in His hands, and His side. Look, I did this for you. I understand you're weak, and fearful: but you're still my friend. Come, follow me again. Then Thomas blurts out his belief in Jesus: "My Lord and my God." Jn. 20: 28 The whole purpose of John's Gospel is to call everyone to: "Come and see." Jn. 1: 39 Jesus, just as Thomas did: "And that by believing you may have life in his name." Jn. 20: 31 And that invitation to: "Come and see." has echoed down the centuries, through the Lord's Church – founded on the Apostles – to us here, today. And yet, we haven't seen the Lord in the same way that Thomas, John, and the other Disciples saw Him. But Jesus speaks directly to us when He says: "Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed." Jn. 20: 29 So, if the Lord is true to His word – which He always is – we've seen Him in the same way, yet differently, to the Disciples. Of course, we can't put our hands into the wounds of the Lord's Passion as Thomas was able to. And yet, in a sense, we're more graced than Thomas was, because we're able to receive Jesus interiorly into our lives through the Real Presence of His Body and Blood in the Eucharist, His voice speaking to us through Scripture, and His guidance through the Holy Spirit working in His Body, the Church. So: "What shall we say about such wonderful things as these? If God is for us, who can ever be against us? Since he did not spare even his own Son but gave him up for us all, won't he also give us everything else?" Rm. 8: 31 – 32 The Risen Jesus wants to walk through the doors of our closed hearts, giving us the power to live as He wants us to live. As bearers of His light: as bestowers of His grace: as givers of His love, life, and mercy. We don't have to be afraid anymore of saying we follow Jesus because, as John told the Christians of his day: "Every child of God defeats this evil world, and we achieve this victory through our faith. And who can win this battle against the world? Only those who believe that Jesus is the Son of God." 1 Jn. 5: 1 – 5