

It is evening on the first day of the week. Although the sun has set and darkness covers the land, for the disciples of Jesus daylight has arrived. The message conveyed to them by Mary Magdalene that the Lord has risen from the dead becomes theirs to experience. Their fear, doubt and devastation are suddenly overcome and replaced by sheer relief, wonder, joy, peace. Their darkness turns to light.

Jesus appears to his disciples. He is alive, though now in a very different mode of living. By God's grace they see him and recognise him. He comes to reassure and encourage them, to strengthen them and give them peace. He comes to reconnect them with himself and with all that he had taught them. Most of all, he comes to commission them, equip them, and send them out in the power of the Spirit to continue the work he had begun, the work of building the kingdom of God on earth.

One of them is missing on that first Easter Sunday – Thomas. But when the disciples come together again eight days later, that is the next Sunday, today, Thomas is with them. The stubborn realist cannot yet accept the testimony of the others that they have seen the Lord. Yet his doubt becomes the doorway to faith. Thomas admitted that he did not believe, and he gave his conditions for changing his mind. But when the risen Jesus appears and addresses him, Thomas recognizes him, and he needs no further convincing. He can only declare in wonder: 'My Lord and my God!' The one unequivocal statement of the divinity of Jesus in the whole Gospel comes from the mouth of 'doubting Thomas.'

In the Eucharist we come to hear, to see, to touch and to be nourished by Jesus in the way that he has given for us until the new age that dawned with him reaches fulfilment. We may not see Jesus as Thomas and the other disciples saw him in those heady days of the first Easter. But sight is also about seeing with the eyes of faith. As Jesus said, if we have faith that he is risen we are as blessed as his first disciples were.

As we come together as his community we have a share in the disciples' experience of connection, of communion, with the risen Lord. And we receive continuing strength and hopefully motivation to live as his disciples, his witnesses in the world.

Our first reading from the Acts of the Apostles highlights how the apostles' testimony to the resurrection of Jesus was expressed most powerfully by the way they lived. Centred on their gatherings for prayer and the breaking of bread, their devotional practice committed them to a common life of fellowship, of sharing their resources and of loving service to those in need. The life of the Church became participation in the life of God. It continued the work of Jesus.

When we were baptized, we were 'Christ-ened,' made one with Christ, with all the potential and purpose of making Christ known to the world through our common life as the Christian community and in our own individual witness and service.

Christ is risen. By coming to Christ, we are raised with him. We do not have to wait for death to experience resurrection, although we do need to die to many death-like attitudes and behaviours. Resurrection is about living connected to God, as the American Franciscan Richard Rohr reflected in his daily online meditation this week. He added that, 'Resurrection happens every time we love someone even though they were not very loving to us..... Every time we decide to trust and begin again, even after repeated failures..... Every time we refuse to become negative, cynical, hopeless..... Resurrection is always possible *now*.'

Because we must *be* Resurrection for others, we must be Life for them. This means that we cannot dwell for ever in despair, and resentment, and anger, and cynicism, all of which are real forms of death that can be inflicted on us long before the physical demise of our human bodies. We will all have our challenges, our times of sorrow, and we need our faith to help us through them. But for the most part, we must be awake, remember that we are risen, and so 'put on life' even when the news is bad, or we feel downcast, and shadows seem to surround us.

To be a follower of Jesus Christ, to live in Christ, is to be risen from death, risen right now. Then we can be Christ to others. Then Christ can still be visible and active in the world. So through the Spirit, in this Eucharist, where we encounter the risen Christ among us, the Christ who is living in the innermost hearts of all who share this great and wonderful life in his name, may we all be

renewed in our identity and calling as Easter people, Resurrection people. May we see the risen Lord more clearly and follow him more confidently. Then, by God's grace, and through our words and works of compassion and love, others may see that the Lord is risen indeed, and he is seeking the renewal, the transformation of all that clings to death and decay in human life and in the world today.