

## Homily 2nd Sunday in Easter - Year C (28.4.19)

This gospel is so rich you couldn't possibly cover it all in a sermon, so I just want to focus on two things:

- The first half, when Jesus appeared on Easter Day, when he greeted the apostles.
- The second half, when he appeared today, eight days later, and received the response of Thomas.

You see, that greeting of Jesus,

**"Peace be with you,"** was an everyday greeting.

If you go to the synagogue today, this week on the Sabbath, I should say, they'll all say to one another,

**"Shabbat shalom,"** the peace of the Sabbath.

It's like saying hello, really, in one way, and good morning. So, it's just a general greeting that's become familiar. But Jesus himself had taught in his own lifetime,

**"The peace that I shall give is the peace that the world cannot give."**

And so, on this Easter Day, when he appeared risen from the dead and repeated that utterance, just imagine how fresh that would have been, suddenly appearing and saying,

**"Peace be with you."**

And he of course was referring to a much deeper peace, the peace of the Easter joy, the peace that comes from God's power in the resurrection, and knowing the truth. And that's why it became part of the liturgy later.

But I don't know if you remember when things changed from Latin to English and they inserted a demonstrative sign of peace in the English version. A lot of people couldn't cope with the changes. And I remember one lady, who I knew about, who would have nothing to do with this new fangled dangled thing of offering the sign of the peace. So, when it came to the priest saying,

**"Let us offer each other the sign of the peace,"** she'd do this [firmly folded her arms]. And everybody got to know not to even attempt to offer her the sign of the peace. But a stranger came one day and went,

**"The peace of Christ be with you,"** and she went... [folding her arms]

[laughter]

And he said to her,

**"I'm trying to offer you the peace of Christ."**

She said,

**"I don't ... want it."**

[laughter]

Quite devastating, really, when you think what she was saying, what she didn't want. And so, it reminds us, though, that there's something much deeper than just a greeting whereas I think she saw it as familiarity. Shaking hands and just wishing one another well. And of course, when we offer the sign of peace at mass, it shouldn't be just that. It can be friendly, but it shouldn't be that. It's actually me saying to you when I address you and you to one another,

**"May the peace of the risen Christ, the peace that the world cannot give, be with you."**

And I hope we inculcate this into our children, that we're actually saying to our children that,

**"When you do that action, when you do that symbolic sign, you're acting like Christ and inviting people to enter into his peace, a peace the world cannot give."**

And then, when we come to the second half, when Thomas is in the room and all that palaver about,

**"Well, look, here's my hands, stick your finger in, here's my side, stick your hand in. Doubt no longer, and believe,"**

Thomas's response is actually beyond what was expected, because he says the profound,

**"My Lord and my God."**

He could've just said,

**"My Lord Jesus, I'm so sorry, I'm repentant, I believe,"** but he didn't.

He said,

**"My Lord and my God,"**

which is not just a mini creed in its own right, but an actual revelation of faith, not through the signs of the holes, but through his sudden faith that awoke him.

I know we call him Doubting Thomas, but he got faith on that day, and not just because of the sight of Jesus. And he saw what the deeper significance of the risen Lord meant. And that's why at the end of that gospel it says,

**"There were many things Jesus did record... Not recorded in this book, but this is so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God."**

And that's what Thomas had come to. Thomas recognised the Son of God through faith. And that response, which I think we're losing sight of, is a devotional response that we're all encouraged to make at the Consecration.

So, when the priest holds up the consecrated host after saying the words and the consecrated chalice after saying the words, we are meant to respond devotionally, in our hearts, like Thomas, and actually say,

**"My Lord and my God."**

That's the devotional tradition we have received; that we react like Thomas at the Consecration. We give acknowledgement to,

**"This is the Christ, the Son of God, come to me in faith. My Lord and my God."**

And I hope too that parents teach their children this tradition, so that they may grow in a love of the Eucharist.