

Reflection on the Gospel-Easter 2C
(John 20:19-31)

-Veronica Lawson RSM

Some of you may remember when we spoke of the Sundays “after Easter”. The terminology has changed and we now speak of the Sundays “of Easter”. In other words, we now recognise that the liturgical readings and prayers for each Sunday between Easter and Pentecost invite us into a different movement of the one great symphony of resurrection faith.

The first scene in today’s gospel has the disciples hiding behind closed doors “for fear” of those who had handed Jesus over to be executed by the Roman authorities. Jesus appears among them, offers a greeting of peace, and tells them that he has been sent by God, his “Father”. They receive from him the gift of the Holy Spirit. He sends them in turn to bring peace and to mediate the forgiveness of God through the power of the Spirit.

The story invites us as believers to place ourselves in the shoes of the earliest disciples. It invites us to receive the gift of the Spirit, to emerge from behind the doors that close us in on ourselves, and that prevent us from rising above the fear of reprisals in our pursuit of justice and peace. It also invites us to ponder the consequences of forgiving on the one hand and of not forgiving on the other. To forgive another is to release that person from the burden of guilt and shame. Forgiveness opens up the possibility of healing for all concerned. To refuse forgiveness or to “retain” the sins of another is to leave that person unforgiven and so unhealed. We might also consider the consequences of refusing to open ourselves to forgiveness. More often than not, those who refuse to forgive others have failed to forgive themselves for their own failures.

The second and third scenes in today’s gospel focus on Thomas who was not with the other disciples when Jesus first appeared in their midst. Thomas is not exactly the trusting type. He seems to trust only his own first hand experience. We all know people like Thomas. They test our patience because they seem to lack imagination. Then they make big statements when they come around to understanding what everyone else has known for a while. If we think, however, that those who hear from the outset are any better than Thomas, we need to note that the doors are still closed eight days later! The simple fact of knowing has not dispelled their fears. Even those who do believe and trust may need a bit of time to take the gospel message on board.