

Homily for the Second Sunday of Easter April 8th 2018

What happened to Thomas in today's Gospel indeed to the other two (one called Cleopas) who were heading to the village of Emmaus?—(They were the subject of last Wednesday gospel at mass.) Were they running away afraid that what happened to Jesus would happen to them... (Hard to blame them) Had they decided they had enough and it was time to return to what they had been doing before they ever encountered Jesus? After all He told them" they will strike the shepherd and the sheep will be scattered." Whatever it was it did not last too long. The two on the road to Emmaus came straight back to the locked upper room in Jerusalem. The doors were locked the Gospel tells us for fear of the Jews where all the Apostles had gathered amidst the confusion about the Risen Jesus and Thomas was there next time as today's Gospel tells us. Against that back drop, Jesus came to the scared community all gathered in the upper room.

Why did He call them back? Would it not be better to let them go? The answer goes to the heart of many of the specially chosen scriptures of this remaining Easter season. Firstly the love of God lavished on his children .Secondly in the future scripture readings we will hear throughout the remainder of the Easter season .We will hear the Gospel stories of vines and branches, the sheep and the shepherds told in coming weeks ,we hear the importance of community. We will listen to the growing authority of Peter when we read of the community small beginnings to expand and proclaim in word and example, the good news of the Risen Christ. In fact there is something of the Garden of Eden about the first reading. It seems like a perfect existence. The Apostles preached and the community began to be formed. Eventually the serpent will enter but for the moment we can glory in this early enthusiasm and fervor which the gospel began to spread.

The importance of community is reciprocal .The community needs to believe in

the risen Jesus, but Jesus also needs the community to go out and make disciples of all nations. The symbiotic relationship between Jesus and the Church is why he calls back the Emmaus bound disciples and the doubting Thomas. Think of the strength they gained from their witness to the resurrection and think of what we have gained from knowing that it is o.k. to doubt, while always remembering to trust. We also see the relationship of the Father and the Son. The obedience and love of the Jesus for the Father mirrors our love and obedience to Jesus. This is obedience, not in the sense of blind loyalty, but as a disciple open and listening to what the Master has to say.

The first thing Jesus says to them is "peace be with you ". How much they must have craved these words. How much do we need to hear them today? These are words of strength to dissipate our fear of the future and potential trouble that this new message will cause. These are words of faith to dispel the darkness of doubt after the horrors of the previous few days. These are words of love

spoken to forgive those who abandoned Him and ran away

Then there is a bestowing of a gift—the Holy Spirit and the commissioning to go out with the message of repentance and forgiveness of sins .This brings the listener right back to the shores of the river Jordan. John’s baptism of repentance was to offer new life to those he baptized and as they walked from one shore to the other through the river, their sins were forgiven. When it was Jesus’ turn we hear the presence of the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove. This is the beginning of Jesus’ ministry. For the followers of Jesus the upper room was their beginning .Thomas was needed because this ministry would be accomplished in solidarity and as a community. This is the very solidarity shown today’s first reading entitled the Acts of the Apostles. This was not an early form of socialism or

communal living but the community's response to the reality of the risen Christ who now lived among them. As Jesus had done so now, they would do and in this way be present to the needs of the other—the joys and hopes ,the griefs and anxieties of any member of the community would be the joys ,hopes ,griefs and anxieties of every member.However ,solidarity wasn't the only activity of this early community .The Apostles continued to testify what they had seen. We like to hear stories but there is authenticity of hearing a story from someone who was there. This community listened to the eye-witness accounts and heard all that Jesus of Nazareth had accomplished. While we are not living in Eden we can still cling to the ideals of this early community – the teachings and the community in solidarity. AMEN. PLEASE NOTE: The written VERSION will be UNABRIDGED. THE PREACHED

**VERSION AT MASS WILL BE
ABRIDGED, because it is too long for
attention purposes. Thank you.**