

BRINGING HOME THE GOSPEL

April 7, 2024 • 2nd Sunday of Easter • John 20:19–31

Peace Be With You

The disciples know that Jesus had died and risen, but this knowledge does not keep them from fearing for their lives. They are afraid that what happens to Jesus will happen to them. Jesus comes to them, and greets them offering his peace.

Jesus' disciples are behind locked doors, afraid that at any minute there will be loud knocking and the soldiers will be there to arrest them. The knock does not come but the Risen Jesus does. And what are Jesus' first words to these disciples he loves? "Peace be with you." Jesus repeats that phrase three times in this Gospel.

Thomas is not present for Jesus' appearance, and when the others tell him about their experience, he doubts their word. Jesus joins the disciples again, and this time Thomas is with them. Once again Jesus greets them with the words, "Peace be with you." What is this peace that Jesus offers his disciples?

It is not the sort of peace that removes one from danger or trauma. Remember, ten of those apostles received the peace of Christ, and all but one of them died martyrs. And it certainly doesn't magically take away fear or apprehension. The disciples kept the doors locked even after Jesus' first visit.

The peace Jesus gives does not obliterate fear, but it does offer comfort and courage and Christ's strength to get through any sort of danger or trial. When we rest in God's peace we know that no matter what happens, all will be right. Even death has lost its power over us.

This is the peace Thomas received after he doubted. It is the peace the disciples received more fully at Pentecost with the coming of the Holy Spirit. It is the same peace we are offered when we cooperate with the Spirit we received in baptism and confirmation. If only we could believe and be truly open to receiving it.

FAMILY RESPONSE

Ask family members to name their number one worry this week. After you have asked God to send the Spirit, sit quietly for about thirty seconds. Tell everyone not to use any words for this prayer, but to just be conscious of every breath they take in and let out.

PERSONAL RESPONSE

What was your experience of the silent prayer like? What do you want to remember from last week? What are you looking forward to next week? What are your concerns?