

“CHANGING MINDS....CHANGING HEARTS”

Easter to Pentecost, 2019

Small Group Gathering for Week No 1

Gospel: 2nd Sunday of Easter; John 20:19-31

Gather:

Before we begin our prayer, reflection and discussion, make sure you know the names of all present. This may happen over simple food and drink.

We gather around a symbol of the faith that unites us; perhaps the opened Scriptures and/or a crucifix.

A candle is lit to signal the start of our gathering. The moving light of the candle is a sign of the living Christ, the Light of the World, with us.

A short time of silence.

Prayer (together):

*Christ our Light,
crucified and risen to new life,
be with us in our prayer
be with us in our silence
be with us in our listening
be with us in our speaking.*

Amen



My Present Life:

Think of your life at present. Spend five minutes in silence dwelling on the following questions.

What on-going commitments are important to me?

What helps me keep these commitments?

Are these commitments for the good of myself and others?

A Faith Angle:

Last Sunday, the Church throughout the world encountered Christ in the following part of the Gospel. Take your time to read it through slowly in silence or listen as a member of your group reads it aloud.



Prayerfully Engaging with Scripture: How?

Your “Participant’s Guide” includes suggestions for how you might prayerfully engage with Scripture. Take a few minutes now to read those brief notes. Perhaps you’d like to follow one of the suggested ways. Perhaps you would prefer to use a way you have used before that you like.

John 20: 19-31

¹⁹ When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.” ²⁰ After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. ²¹ Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” ²² When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³ If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.”

²⁴ But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. ²⁵ So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord.” But he said to them, “Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe.”

²⁶ A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.” ²⁷ Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe.” ²⁸ Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God!” ²⁹ Jesus said to him, “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.”

³⁰ Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. ³¹ But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

(Bible Gateway, “New Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition
<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=JN+20%3A19-31&version=NRSVCE> retrieved 12/03/2019)

Now, read the passage a second time. You may like to place yourself in the scene or you may like to dwell on only a small piece of the text. Or you may have a different way for engaging prayerfully with the Scriptures.

Some Other Thoughts:

Because we hear only parts of the gospel at Mass each Sunday, we sometimes don't see links that reading and study of the gospel as a whole may bring out.

The Australian scripture scholar, Frank Moloney, points out that Thomas's coming to faith in the risen Christ is the third faith commitment that John describes, one after the other, in what centuries later would be called Ch 20 of his gospel. The otherwise unidentified disciple "whom Jesus loved" had come to belief when he had entered the empty tomb on Easter morning. At the same time Mary of Magdala was clinging to Jesus when she realised he was standing in front of her. Now, a week later, Thomas too believes in Christ. This belief is not some kind of intellectual understanding, it is a giving of the heart, a deep commitment.

(Moloney, *The Gospel of John*, Sacra Pagina series, 1998)

A little point of possible interest. Jesus invites Thomas to place his finger and his hand on Jesus' wounds. John immediately tells us of Thomas' acclamation of faith, "My Lord and my God". We are not told if Thomas did actually touch Jesus or not. Perhaps his heart and mind were already filled with the peace that Jesus had announced to all in the room.

At Pentecost time we will read and hear about the coming of the Holy Spirit fifty days after Easter. That's the way Luke tells the story. For John, Jesus' spirit had already been let loose in the world at the moment of Jesus' death when "bowing his head, he handed over the spirit" (John 19,30). On Easter evening, in the passage we've read, Jesus shares his Holy Spirit with his followers in a special way as he sends them into the world.



Sharing:

If you wish, only if you wish, share one or two (no more than two) of your thoughts or insights about the passage. Please speak for no more than twenty seconds at a time. This sharing is not a time for comparing the values of people's comments; it is certainly not a time for debate.

Go back to the gospel reading for another period of silent engagement.

My Future Life:

Turning to the future, and in the light of your prayer reflection and discussion, spend at least five minutes considering the following questions.

What is a commitment you wish to strengthen? Why? How do you plan to do this? How will you know if you are making progress?

Is there something in your life, taking up your time and energy that is not really adding to the true happiness of others and yourself? Can you eliminate or markedly decrease this commitment? How? How will you know you are making progress?

Go:

This has been a special time. It will have been worthwhile if it leads us to live, even in a little way, as better people in those everyday lives. We ask God's blessing on us and our lives as we return to them.

Let us pray...

*Lord,
may everything we do
begin with your inspiration
and continue with your help,
so that all our prayers and works
may begin in you
and by you be happily ended.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.*

