

April 27, 2014 – 2nd Sunday of Easter – Year A
Is Your Mirror Broken?

Our Gospel reading today is the source of that familiar term, "Doubting Thomas".

If we were to quote Thomas in the language of today Thomas might well say, "The Lord has risen? No way, Jose! Prove it to me!"

And when the Lord comes to them the following Sunday Thomas' response might well be, "OMG! Oh my God!"

While we might smile at those words I think that most important messages come from five statements that Jesus makes in the Gospel.

1. "Peace be with you."
2. "As the Father has sent me I send you."
3. "Receive the Holy Spirit."
4. "Whose sins you shall forgive are forgiven them."
5. "Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed."

Let's take a look at each them briefly.

Peace be with you

Jesus always knows the right thing to say at the right time.

When he comes his disciples are scared out of their wits!

They are hiding behind locked doors because they are afraid that they will be the next ones captured and crucified like Jesus.

Then they are scared out of their wits because they think they see a ghost right in their midst.

So Jesus says just what they need to hear: "Peace be with you."

Then he shows them that it is really him in flesh and blood, with the wounds from the crucifixion.

Of course, the disciples rejoice when they find that Jesus is really alive.

While they are relieved and overjoyed, Jesus gets their attention with his next words:

As the Father has sent me I send you

They had some experience with this already.

Jesus had previously sent them two by two to cities to announce that Jesus would be coming to preach in their towns.

Jesus really knew how to delegate!

Jesus really knew how to advertise!

Jesus really knew that they would need encouragement for their mission so next he tells them:

Receive the Holy Spirit

Jesus knew, but the disciples did not yet know, that he would be with them only 40 more days.

They needed an on-going presence of Jesus to give them the energy, the memories, and the persistence that it would take to be his witnesses - in their local area and around the whole world.

The Holy Spirit would be that presence of God, the presence of Jesus with them.

Jesus then gives them a new task that they had not done on prior trips.

Jesus tells them that:

Whose sins you forgive will be forgiven

Jesus wants people to come closer to God and sin is a major stumbling block for people getting closer to God.

Jesus had overcome sin with his death and resurrection.

Now people could also overcome sin with Jesus in their lives.

One week later, when our Doubting Thomas has his faith rejuvenated by Jesus visiting with them again, Jesus gives us the fifth proclamation:

Blessed are those who have not seen and who believe.

According to the Acts of the Apostles, Chapter 1, vs 15, there were about 120 Christians in the very early church.

That's not very many, is it?

Today there are about two billion Christians in the world.

That's roughly one Christian out of every three people in the world!

World-wide, most of the Christians, about 60%, are Catholics.

How many of these two billion have seen Jesus face to face?

I'll let you think about that for awhile.

Let's go back to Jesus' proclamation:

Receive the Holy Spirit

When the disciples received the Holy Spirit,

and when we receive the Holy Spirit,

we are to become *mirrors of God*;

we are to *reflect Jesus*.

People looking at our lives should see Jesus at work in us.

St. Paul tells what it is like when we are **not** living in the Spirit.

In Galatians 5:19-20 he lists:

"immorality, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, hatreds, rivalry, jealousy, outbursts of fury, acts of selfishness, dissensions, factions, occasions of envy, drinking bouts, orgies, and the like."

St. Paul then tells us what it means "to live in the Spirit": (Gal 5:22-23)

"In contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control."

[The ushers are now going to hand out a little card with these lists and some other comments.]

The card shows two choices: a household ***with*** or ***without*** the Spirit.

Would I rather have a household where we *mirrored* Jesus or where all our *mirrors* were broken?

We have seen many examples of people who *mirrored* Jesus in their lives.

We (are having/had) a memorial for a former parish member, Betty

Antaya, who went out of her way to befriend all strangers, oddballs, and 'outsiders', and make them feel welcome.

She opened her home to her daughters' friends and served them healthy snacks in addition to cookies and sweets treats.

She was a member of the Altar Society and spent many hours cleaning around our altar and back in the sacristy.

She taught religion to our younger children. Now that's a *mirror*!!

Another example of someone *mirroring* Jesus is Pope John XXIII who is being canonized a saint this very weekend.

He convened the Second Vatican Council which returned the liturgy to the language of the people.

He reached out to people of different faith thus reducing hostilities among the various Christian denominations and between Christians and Jews.

This same weekend Pope John Paul II is also being made a saint.

We recall him for his travels to 129 countries to *mirror* Jesus and bring joy to all humankind.

We recall him for his love for youth and establishing World Youth Days where he gathered the youth of the world to celebrate their faith.

For all the families of children being baptized today (tomorrow), I pray for blessings on them so that they may have very few broken *mirrors* so they can reflect Jesus alive today in their families and to us.

Oh yes! That question about two billion Christians???

Why are they Christians today?

They have seen Jesus -- *reflected* by you, by me and by so many others. ***Christ in me, arise! So I will reflect Jesus to everyone I meet this week.***

In which household would you like to live?

1. Where the Holy Spirit has been received, people are living in the Spirit, and we are reflecting Jesus to others? [good mirrors!]

As St. Paul tells us in Gal 5:22-23 there we will have:

"love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self control". And we could add: mercy & forgiveness

OR

2. Where the Holy Spirit has ***not*** been received, people are ***not*** living in the Spirit, and we are not reflecting Jesus to others? [broken mirrors!]

As St. Paul tells us in Gal 5:19-20 there we will have:

"immorality, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, rivalry, jealousy, outbursts of fury, acts of selfishness, dissensions, factions, occasions of envy, drinking bouts, orgies, and the like." And we could add: abuse, cheating, lying, stealing.