

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

-Veronica Lawson RSM

Not so long ago we used to speak 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 different movements 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. As supporters of someone executed on a political charge, they had reason to be fearful. 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 the pursuit of justice and peace.

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 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 in the first place 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 the fears. Even those who do believe and trust often need time to take the gospel message on board.

While Christians continue to celebrate Easter, our Jewish sisters and brothers have been marking *Yom HaShoah*, Holocaust Remembrance Day (April 27-28). We might join our prayers with theirs for the many who died at the hands of those who allowed their racial fears and prejudices to take unimaginable directions. We might also pray for the courage to challenge all forms of discrimination and shameful brutality in our own times and the strength to open our hearts and our homeland, without fear, to those who seek refuge among us.