



2<sup>nd</sup> Week of Easter: 11<sup>th</sup>/ 12<sup>th</sup> April 2021  
Reflection / Homily – Mgr Daniel McHugh

**“Peace be with you”**

As we listen to the News this week we are very aware of the fragility of Peace in Ireland. I think particularly of the friction in the North: The Good Friday Peace that led to absence of war between different factions is under threat. We are praying for Peace so that people may go about their lives in safety. Sadly, the picture is similar in many parts of the world, and Pope Francis has expressed concern, and urged leaders in different nations to settle differences in justice for all. His appeal to the Faiths to come together as brothers and sisters under “One God” has struck an important cord, particularly recently in Iraq. The Church has played its part in working for peace over many years: we call to mind great documents like *Pacem in Terris* (Peace on Earth), from Pope St John XXIII in 1963 where the Pope placed his hopes for international peace in social order based on freedom, justice, love and truth. And Pope St Paul VI in 1967 in *Populorum Progressio* (the Development of Peoples) called development “the new name for peace”.

So it is most striking in the Gospel for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Easter that the two appearances of Jesus to His Disciples begin with the words “Peace be with you”. The first of the Appearances is on the first day of the week; we are told in St John Chapter 20 that they were gathered “for fear of the Jews...Jesus came and stood among them. He said to them ‘Peace be with you’ and showed them His hands and His side.” Thomas was not there John recalls. Then eight days later Jesus appeared again. Once more he said “Peace be with you”. Again Thomas is mentioned because this leads to his famous Profession of Faith in Jesus Risen from the Dead: “my Lord and my God.”

What is the Peace Jesus brings: clearly it is something more, something deeper than absence of war. Jesus says earlier in Chapter 14 of St John: “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.” This Peace is to be seen in the context of Jesus Death and Resurrection, His victory over sin and death in which we share through the coming of the Holy Spirit.

I have seen that Peace living in people to whom I have taken Holy Communion as they neared death; and at the Heart of it is Faith.” In fact Jesus says to Thomas in the passage from which we read this second Sunday: “you believe because you can see me. Happy are those who have not seen and yet believe”.

We are not absolved from proclaiming peace to the world by our words and actions. Jesus says “Blessed are the peacemakers”. And, St Paul reflects on the Peace between peoples and communities that has come through Christ in the letter to the Ephesians

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Chapter 2 where he writes: “he is our peace, who has made us one and broken down the dividing wall of hostility.”

If we are going to be a witness for Peace in the world, the Peace that comes through Christ, then I think we should reflect too on the lesson of Thomas in the reading from St John, and what that could mean in terms of the Church Community itself, especially in the time of the Pandemic when people are not gathering for Mass in the same numbers, and how we can get back together in the way we used to. Thomas is absent from the gathering of Disciples; we are not told why – was he too busy with his own affairs, was he overcome with all that had happened, disappointed perhaps in Jesus seeming failure to achieve all they hoped for. Whatever it was, Thomas finds his doubts resolved in coming together in prayer, and, in sharing the memories of Jesus with the others. One of our biggest challenges in the Church is reaching out to those who are absent from our Catholic Community and drawing them in to discover the presence of Jesus among us: this has been an issue for us before COVID-19 began, and it will be even more pressing now.

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