

SAINT LOUIS ABBEY



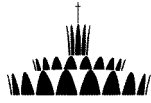
Prior Paul Kidner Homily
Second Sunday of Easter, Year C
Abbey Church 9 AM, 4/15/07

Jesus first gift to his disciples after his resurrection was Peace, something which we ardently desire -- in our own lives, in our families and our communities, and in our world. Let us open our hearts to receive Christ's gift this Easter season as we turn to him and ask him to remove the barrier of sin which separates us from him.

One of the most striking things in the stories of Jesus' apparitions after his resurrection is the tremendous transformation that they brought about in his disciples. At the time of Jesus' crucifixion they were timid, secretly meeting in terror, fearful of being arrested. You remember that when Peter was warming himself by the fire he denied knowing Christ when questioned by a servant girl, not even someone in authority. After his appearance to them we see them openly and courageously speaking out, fearless of the authorities, attracting new converts to the initial band of Christians through the power of their words and their actions. The miracles worked by Peter and the others in the Acts of the Apostles mirror the miracles carried out by Jesus in his lifetime. The members of Christ's body carry on his work, to those in physical need and to those who need Christ's peace. And these stories are recounted each year in the Easter season to remind us of our task, as members of Christ's body, to continue this work of bringing Christ's peace to others.

The disciples received their mission from Christ when he breathed his Spirit upon them, as today's gospel recounts. John's thought is not expressed in the same way as Paul's. He does not develop a theology of the Body of Christ, but his theology of the presence of Christ in the world has similar consequences: it is through those who are marked with and carry his Spirit that Christ works and that he is brought to the world.

The power and courage of those first disciples were built on their faith in the risen Lord. The story of Thomas is used in today's gospel to bring this out. Thomas was a pessimist by nature. There is no doubt that he loved Jesus. When Jesus proposed going up to Jerusalem, Thomas was



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the one who said: "Let us also go that we may die with him". It was because of his love and his broken heart that Thomas needed to confront his sorrow alone after Christ's crucifixion. So he was not with the others when Jesus first appeared to them. As a pessimist, he would never believe that Christ had risen from the dead until he had seen and handled the marks of the nails in Jesus' hands and the wound the spear had made in Jesus' side. One of Thomas's qualities was an uncompromising honesty. He could not still his doubts by pretending that they did not exist. He was not the kind of person who could rattle off the creed without understanding what it was all about. So after another week Jesus appeared again and this time Thomas was there. His other great virtue was that when he was convinced, he was totally committed; he went the whole way. He is the one who proclaims: "My Lord and my God", not any of the other disciples. Thomas is transformed by his faith in the risen Lord.

We see what this transformation meant to the early Christians in the stories of the Acts of the Apostles. There is an intense feeling of responsibility for each other; there is a monastic sharing of possessions; there is courageous witness to their faith, whatever the consequences; there is great joy and there is peace. Christ wishes that we also may be transformed by our faith in his resurrection and he wants to give us these same gifts of peace and joy. May we be open to receive them. +