

Reflections on the Readings for the 2nd Sunday of Easter A

John 20:19-31

Every Year on the Second Sunday of Easter we are offered this famous Gospel passage that we usually refer to as “The Appearance to Doubting Thomas”. So much is going on here: confirmation for the other disciples of Mary Magdalene’s claim that she had met Jesus risen from the dead; the gift of the Holy Spirit for the forgiveness of sins; after his doubts the coming to faith of Thomas; and the claim that this episode and, indeed, the whole Gospel, is written to bring us all to belief in the Risen Lord, “and that by believing you may have life in his name.” With all this going on it might be difficult to home in on a single aspect of the story. Perhaps a thought from the Pope who sent St Augustine and his companions to England at the beginning of the 7th Century to evangelise the pagan Saxon and Angle tribes, might provoke a focus. In a homily on this gospel passage he wrote, “The disbelief of Thomas has done more for our faith, than the faith of the other disciples.” Is that the case for you?

Acts of the Apostles 2:42-47

As the story of the early preaching of the Gospel unfolds in the early days after Pentecost, we are offered a quite idyllic picture of the first Christian Community: united in faith, living a life lived in common, in which everything was willingly shared, celebrating the memory of Jesus, especially in prayer and the “breaking of bread”. Other people were attracted to the community by the witness they gave, which included prayer in the Temple. The early community, at this stage, consists solely of faithful, observant Jews.

1 Peter 1:3-9

From today, until the final Sunday before Pentecost, our Second Readings are extracts from this First Letter of St Peter. It is thought to be addressed to a group of churches in central Asia Minor that were under ever-present threat of persecution and death for their adherence to Christ. This first section talks of people being “grieved by various trials”, and how their faith will have been tested by fire. It has been suggested that the whole letter is a post-baptismal catechesis for a community whose faith is challenged, an encouragement to persevere in spite of the dangers and difficulties that they face. The ultimate reward for faithfulness, suggested at the end of this passage is, “the salvation of your souls”.

Prayer

Lord, as we celebrate your rising from the dead help us to pray each day, along with Thomas, “My Lord, and my God.” Amen