

Reflection for Thursday 30th April on Jn 20: 19-31

'You believe because you have seen, blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe.'

One week after the resurrection the disciples were still afraid, hiding behind closed doors even though they had seen Jesus on many occasions. When Jesus appeared to them Thomas was not present and they had been unable to convince him that Jesus had risen. 'Unless I put my fingers in the place of the nails and put my hand into his side I will not believe.'

Jesus returns and stands in the same place in the midst of the disciples and repeats his greeting, 'peace be with you'. Jesus wants us to see him as someone who will raise us up from our unbelief to faith in his resurrection. In his homily for Divine Mercy Sunday the Pope compares us to a child taking its first steps learning to walk, *'We go forward in faith like a toddler who takes tentative steps but who continues to fall and is lifted up by his father: the hand that always puts us back on our feet is the Father's mercy.'* God knows that without mercy we would remain on the ground and in order to keep walking we need to be put back on our feet. Our Lord knows that we will always keep stumbling, falling into sin. He does not want us to focus always on our failings but wants us to look to him when we fall.

Jesus said to St Faustina, 'I am love and mercy itself, nothing could measure up to my mercy.' St Faustina told Jesus she had offered all she had to him, but there was something she had not offered to him which he really wanted, her failings. We could say the same, have we given our failings to the Lord? Have I let him see me fall so that he can raise me up? Is there something I keep inside me, a sin, a regret from the past, a wound I have inside, a grudge against someone? Our Lord waits for us to offer him our failings so that he can show us his mercy.

Jesus was aware of the failings of his disciples, they had all abandoned him at his passion and crucifixion but he wants to demonstrate his love and mercy to them. Thomas touches Jesus' wounds and experiences the closeness of his love and immediately overtakes the other disciples in his faith saying, 'My Lord and my God'.

In this time of lockdown and fear and threat to our lives in the pandemic, we are faced with our own weakness and frailty. Not just the older ones and those with underlying health conditions. Some young and very fit people have not been able to survive the virus. We are all vulnerable and when all else fails what do we have left except our faith in the grace of God. Although we might be filled with Easter joy, St Peter reminds us that we may have to suffer as there is no resurrection without the cross. We ask Almighty God for the strength to face whatever lies ahead for ourselves and our families and may Our Lady protect us always.

Deacon Kevin