

(Pasch B2) Second Sunday of Eastertide

(APRIL 11<sup>TH</sup>, 2021)

**Readings:** Acts 4:32 – 35; Ps. 117 (118):1 – 4, 16 – 18, 22 – 24; 1 John 5: 1 – 6; John 20:19 – 31.

On the Sundays and weekdays of Eastertide the first reading at mass comes from *The Acts of the Apostles*. This book (as most of you will know) is the companion to the third Gospel, and, like the Gospel, is the work of Luke, traditionally identified with the *beloved physician* mentioned by Saint Paul in his letter to the Colossians (4:14). It is clear that this double work was written to teach a gentile, Greek-speaking individual, or community, about the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, and about the beginnings of the Christian community which was founded on these events. It was probably written about AD 80.

Many of the Sunday readings come from the “sermons” or other instruction given by Peter or Paul, but on this Second Sunday of Easter we hear each year of some aspect of the common life of the earliest followers of the risen Christ.

Today the emphasis is on the unity of the group of believers – both in its inward spiritual nature and in the outward expression of that nature: it *was united heart and soul*, and this unity showed in the way that they shared all their possessions, so that *none of their members were never in want*.

There have been attempts throughout the Church’s history to repeat this type of common life, but it does not seem possible to maintain it for all Christians. We must recognize that Luke and his contemporaries lived in the expectation of the return of Christ in the very near future. Since that time the Church has had to come to terms with its existence in a world increasingly interconnected and complex. It is only in smaller groups, such as communities of monks and nuns, friars and sisters, that the example of these earliest believers can be followed in detail.

But we should not make excuses for ourselves and ignore the underlying message of Luke’s description of the Church. We should regard the things we own as held in trust from God – rather than being ours to use or spend just as we like. We have an obligation to support our fellow Christians in need – whether close at hand or far away.

A generous common life is a necessary companion to our witness *to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus* – and it may even have the effect of earning the *great respect* which Luke tells us was given to these predecessors of ours in the faith.