

Second Sunday of Easter

By: Fr. Bob

The pastor of a small congregation was being proselytized by some energetic missionaries. He listened for a while and then said to them: "Gentlemen, look. I have a proposal that will settle this. I have here a glass of poison. If you will drink this poison and remain alive, I will join your church—and not only myself, but my entire congregation. But if you won't drink the poison, well, then, I can only conclude that you are false ministers of the gospel because you do not trust that your Lord would not let you perish."

This put the missionaries in a bind, so they went off to a corner to put their heads together, and they said, "What on earth are we going to do?" Finally, after a while, they decided. They came back and approached the minister and said, "Tell you what. We've got a plan. You drink the poison, and we'll raise you from the dead!"

Our scripture for this Second Sunday of Easter is about believing—but it's also about doubting and wondering and trying to figure things out. In a way, the whole Easter story is about allowing the story of this loving God who gives us Jesus, allowing this loving God to form us.

Our first reading from the Acts of the Apostles, a book we'll be reading each week in this Easter Time talks about that early community that we formed by their belief in Jesus, by their realization of the fact that they were transformed and new—and they lived like it.

The writer tells us that they shared everything—whatever one needed was provided for. We think right away of money—but the fact is that there was more to it than material stuff. They were aware of one another and welcoming to one another and compassionate. Isn't that what makes us complete as well as bread on the table?

And then there is the Gospel story of resurrection and appearance. Jesus comes twice through locked doors to convince the disciples of the truth. And they believe, for now.

But Thomas is missing and not part of the group. Eventually he too experiences the presence and believes as well.

We gather as a community that is also hopefully formed by our realization of the love of God. We hopefully can reflect on the ways we have been convinced of the presence of the

Christ in our midst—not perhaps as dramatic as what those disciples experienced in the locked room—but real anyway.

But when we don't live like the people in that first reading—and don't even try—when we are not living like Easter people we can wonder what the obstacle is.

Perhaps it's locked doors. Why after all these years of learning of the love of God and God's presence in others do we still lock ourselves away from others? Perhaps what we need to do is to leave the doors open for anyone to come in and help themselves. It might just do you and me some good. And then the world would hear the message—All you who are thirsty come to the water! You who have no money, come, receive and eat; Come without paying and without cost, drink wine and milk.

Go out, therefore, into main roads and invite to the feast whomever you find.

And so it's not just material things that we lock away—it is our hearts and ideas, and beliefs and our dreams. We need to invite people to them as those in the first reading did.

Perhaps another obstacle is that we miss the appearance of the risen one. Thomas wasn't there. He was probably grieving. His dream, the dream fostered by Jesus, was gone. And so he was alone wallowing in it all and he missed out.

Sometimes we miss the presence of God and of God's love by being so wrapped up in something else—in our own worries, in our prejudices, in our fears. And we miss out.

The bottom line is that God loves us—we need to be there and realize it. And we need to open up to experience and allow others to experience. And that is community. And that is what God calls us to.

And so we celebrate Easter. We look in these days for evidence of the risen one so that we might be transformed and formed and made into the image we were called to be—Easter People.

READINGS OF THE WEEK

Acts 4: 32-35

1 John 5: 1-6

John 20: 19-31

April 15, 2012

靈 修 生 活

我 們 是 天 主 的 兒 女

陳日君樞機主教

這個主日的福音，甲乙丙三年都一樣；第一篇讀經又都是取用宗徒大事錄中，關於初期教會的綜合描寫，每年不同的是第二篇讀經。今年是若望一書，第五章，一至六節。

藉這段聖經，教會提醒新領洗的兄弟姊妹和我們，要認清我們的身分：信受難而復活的耶穌，使我們成了天主的子女！雖然在其他宗教裡也有類似的講法，稱信徒為天主子，但為若望宗徒這絕不是一種講法，而是真真正正的事實。他說：「請看，父賜給我們何等的愛情，使我們得稱為天主的子女，而且我們也真是如此。」(若一、第三章開端)「我們生於天主」(讀經二)，我們當然是天主的子女。

這崇高的身分，只有在基督光榮來臨時才會顯露出來，若望說：「我們現在是天主的子女，但我們將來如何，還沒有顯明，可是我們知道，一顯明了，我們必要相似祂。」保祿宗徒也說：「當基督，我們的生命顯現時，那時，你們也要與祂一同出現在光榮之中。」(哥三4)

我們當然不是呆著等待那日子的來臨。這身分已是事實，但也要我們繼續栽培它。這復活第二主日傳統稱為卸白衣主日。新領洗的教友卸下他們在洗禮中所領受的白衣，開始他們在這新生命裡成長的旅程。復活期也是釋奧期，那在復活夜發生的事，實在太奇妙，太豐富了，我們一定要再三玩味，才能深入了解它的意義；要全心投入，才能發揮它的功效。

再三玩味。為體驗做天主子女的幸福，我們當然要借力我們做人子女的經驗。如果我們有幸福的童年，有疼愛我們的父母，我們可以把這愛的經驗提昇千萬倍，去想像天父對我們的大愛。如果我們沒有這美好的經驗，我們曾嫉妒別人的福分，那末我們可以肯定天主的愛能千萬倍彌補這人生的缺陷。

我認識一位有長鬍鬚的傳教士，他老人家常稱天主為爸爸：「爸爸會這樣做，爸爸要我們那樣做……。」宗徒們對耶穌最深的印象，也不就是祂親切地稱天父為「亞爸、父啊！」？

我不主張在禮儀中太情緒化，但當我們私自唸天主經時，大可以唸：「我在天的好爸爸」。

全心投入。我們歌唱：「我是教友，頂大光榮。」但光榮也帶來責任。我是教友，我應該度信徒的生活；我是天主的兒女，我的生活應該符合這身分；領洗時我受祝聖了，所以我應該做聖人！

聖若望說：做天主的兒女就要愛天主，愛天主就要遵守祂的誡命，最重要的誡命就是我們要彼此相親相愛。他還補充說：「祂的誡命並不沉重。」

要全心、全靈、全力愛天主在萬有之上，在一切誘惑中堅守所有誡命，絕不簡單。要愛所有的人、陌生人、叫我們討厭的人、和我們作對的人，談何容易。為信仰、為愛德而犧牲性命，固然是天主給少數人的特恩，但耶穌和教會都沒有隱瞞我們：在日常生活中，信徒時常該準備作出「英雄級」的犧牲。那末若望怎麼能說這一切「並不沉重」？

不過我們不要忘記，主也親自說過：「我的軛是柔和的，我的擔子是輕鬆的。」(瑪十一30) 聖若望指出箇中的秘訣：那戰勝世界的武器，就是天主給我們的信德；真理的聖神也為我們作證：耶穌是天主子。為分享祂「天主子」的身分，甚麼犧牲都非常值得。

摘自「公教報」

本 週 讀 經

二零一二年四月十五日

宗 4:32-35 ; 若一 5:1-6 ; 若 20:19-31