



Second Sunday of Easter – Divine Mercy † Sunday 23rd April 2017

Cycle of Prayer: New Members of the Church
Keynote: The Lord is risen! We rejoice and are glad!

Acts of the Apostles 2: 42-47

'The whole community remained faithful to the teaching of the apostles, to the brotherhood, to the breaking of bread and to the prayers.' It seems that the author, Luke – the evangelist – is recording the essential requirements of membership in his early Christian community, and hence of membership in our own community today. What is expected is unwavering fidelity to the **didache** – the teaching of the Apostles; a sense of communal life and sharing and caring in the **koinonia** – the community; and the experience of the **Eucharist** – the breaking of the bread and the prayer together. In this way Luke tells us, *'they met in their houses for the breaking of the bread, they shared their food gladly and generously, they praised God and were looked up to by everyone. Day by day the Lord added to their community those destined to be saved.'*

Responsorial Psalm 117 (118) – A processional song of praise and thanksgiving – Alleluia!

First Letter of Peter 1: 3-9

Some scholars question whether Peter is personally the author of this letter. But all agree the letter is to be dated just prior to the death of Peter in Rome about 65 AD. *'Blessed be God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,'* Peter writes, *'who in his great mercy has given us new birth as his sons, by raising Jesus Christ from the dead, so that we have a sure hope and the promise of an inheritance.'* The form of these words, words of opening blessing are typical of the style of Jewish letters of the time. Here the author, Peter, proclaims the initiative taken by the Father in offering freedom to us to become the children of God through faith and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. *'Through your faith God's power will guard you until the salvation which has been prepared is revealed at the end of time. This is a cause of great joy for you, even though you may for a short time have to bear being plagued by all sorts of trials; so that, when Jesus Christ is revealed, your faith will have been tested and proved like gold – only more precious than gold... then you will have praise and glory and honour.'*

Gospel according to John 20: 19-31

'In the evening of that same day, the first day of the week, the doors were closed in the room where the disciples were... Jesus came and stood among them. He said to them, "Peace be with you," and showed them his hands and side.' This sudden presence of Jesus in this upper room does tell us that the risen Christ was in some way different. Yet, in spite of this the disciples recognise Jesus as he stands among them. *'The disciples were filled with joy when they saw the Lord... and he said to them again, "Peace be with you."'* There are here two post resurrection appearances of Jesus. In the first, Jesus gives the disciples their mission, *'As the Father sent me, so am I sending you...'* he breathed on them and said, *'Receive the Holy Spirit. For those whose sins you forgive, they are forgiven.'* The disciples are to continue the mission Jesus received from the Father. In the second appearance, we have the profound expression of faith by the 'doubting' Thomas who was absent on the first occasion, and clearly needed to see things for himself. After placing Thomas' fingers in the marks of the nails, Jesus says to Thomas, *'You believe because you can see me. Happy are those who have not seen and yet believe.'* So we are invited to faith, and with Thomas we too can say, *'My Lord and my God!'*

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Note: In England – Solemnity of Saint George, Martyr, transferred to Monday 24th April.