

Second Sunday of Easter  
Sunday, April 7, 2024

### **Introduction to the day**

The Easter season is a week of weeks, seven Sundays when we play in the mystery of Christ's presence, mostly through the glorious Gospel of John. Today we gather with the disciples on the first Easter, and Jesus breathes the Spirit on us. With Thomas we ask for a sign, and Jesus offers us his wounded self in the broken bread. From frightened individuals we are transformed into a community of open doors, peace, forgiveness, and material sharing such that no one among us is in need.

### **Upcoming Commemorations**

**Dietrich Bonhoeffer, theologian, died 1945**

**Tuesday, April 9, 2024**

Bonhoeffer was a German theologian who wrote profoundly, yet in an accessible manner. In the Second World War, he became a leader of the Confessing Church in Germany that resisted the Nazi movement. Linked to a plot to kill Hitler, he was hanged shortly before the end of the war.

**Mikael Agricola, Bishop of Turku, died 1557**

**Wednesday, April 10, 2024**

Consecrated bishop of Turku, Finland, without the approval of the pope, Agricola began a reform along Lutheran lines. In only three years, he translated the New Testament and worship texts into Finnish, in the process establishing the rules of Finnish writing that are still used today.

### **PRAYER OF THE DAY**

Let us pray.

Almighty God, with joy we celebrate the day of our Lord's resurrection. By the grace of Christ among us, enable us to show the power of the resurrection in all that we say and do, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**Amen.**

### **FIRST READING: Acts 4:32-35**

A reading from Acts.

*While the apostles testified to others about the resurrection of Jesus, the early Christian community shared what they owned or sold their possessions to help their fellow believers who were in need.*

### **PSALM: Psalm 133**

How good and pleasant it is to live together in unity. (Ps. 133:1)

### **SECOND READING: 1 John 1:1--2:2**

A reading from 1 John.

*The opening of this letter serves as a reality check. The reality of God is light, but our confessed reality has been sin. God cleanses us from our sinful reality through Christ's death so that we live in fellowship with Christ and walk in God's light.*

## **GOSPEL: John 20:19-31**

*The story of Easter continues as the risen Jesus appears to his disciples. His words to Thomas offer a blessing to all who entrust themselves in faith to the risen Lord.*

## **GOSPEL MESSAGE**

### **Sharing Joy**

“Thank you for sharing our joy,” said the parents of the bride to the wedding guests. This simple message sums up the reason we gather with loved ones to celebrate the best moments of our lives. When we share our joy, it multiplies.

When the disciples were gathered in a locked room, the appearance of the risen Jesus transformed their fear into joy. On the evening of the resurrection, all the disciples except Thomas were together. They got to see Jesus standing among them, and they rejoiced! Immediately, Jesus gave them the gift of the Holy Spirit. He also sent them out to continue his work in the world, including the forgiveness of sins.

With that commissioning, Jesus channeled the disciples’ joy into a sense of belonging and purpose. Now they were no longer afraid or isolated. Jesus was alive. Everything had changed! Their risen Lord made them into a new community. But Thomas wasn’t there when Jesus first stood among them, and he couldn’t grasp the good news. He saw the joy radiating from the other disciples’ faces, but he didn’t share it.

As a gift of grace, Jesus appeared again and brought Thomas into the new community. He let the skeptical disciple see and touch the wounds on his body. By doing so, Jesus extended the joy and sense of belonging that the others had experienced to Thomas, who responded with joy, “My Lord and my God!”

As disciples of Jesus, we belong to the same resurrection community that our risen Lord created that first Easter evening. We get to share our joy in the promise of forgiveness of sins and eternal life with those around us. Our believing and sense of belonging fortify each other. As today’s reading from 1 John declares, when we celebrate Jesus’ resurrection and carry out God’s work in the world together, our joy is made complete.

## **PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION**

Rejoicing that Jesus is risen and love has triumphed over fear, let us pray for the church, the world, and all those in need of good news.

Your church cries out, O God, and you listen. As you drew near to the disciples, draw near to us this day. Breathe on us your Holy Spirit, that our faith is renewed and we witness to your love. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Your creation cries out, O God, and you listen. Nurture trees, crops, wildflowers, and all growing things. Guide farmers, gardeners, arborists, and others who tend the soil and nurture plants into life. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Your world cries out, O God, and you listen. Guide police, firefighters, paramedics, and other first responders to work for the well-being of communities and the dignity of every person, that no one may need to live in fear. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Your children cry out, O God, and you listen. Hear your people crying out for justice, for an end to racism and other oppression, and for a world where all are fed and safe. We pray for all who cry out in suffering or pain *especially* Sandra Gagnon, Karen Weigold, Keith Weckwerth, Karen O'Day, Shirley Glickman, Marilyn Schneider, Denita Wolfgram, Stephanie Yourth, Christopher Yourth, Linda Boland, Peter Howell, Glenda Panke, Mark Bimm, Harold Yourth, Irene Churchill, Debbie Thom, Donna L Hoffman, Walter Hobden, Doug Holly, Gary Churchill and those in long term care facilities and senior residences. In this moment of silence we name out loud or in the quiet of our hearts those who need your healing touch. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Your congregations cry out, O God, and you listen. Renew pastors, deacons, musicians, and other staff, administrators, and volunteers who facilitated Holy Week and Easter worship. Open our hearts to discern where God calls each of us to serve. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Accept our gratitude, O God, for the lives of those who now rest in you especially Dietrich Bonhoeffer and all whose lives have been given in faithfulness to the gospel. Grant us your peace amid our fears. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Into your hands, most merciful God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your abiding love; through Jesus Christ, our resurrected and living Lord. **Amen.**

### **BLESSING**

The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord's face shine on you with grace and mercy.

The Lord look upon you with favor and ☩ give you peace.

**Amen.**

### **DISMISSAL**

Go in peace. Share the good news.

**Thanks be to God.**

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