

Second Sunday of Easter – April 19, 2020

Acts 2: 42-47 – 1 Peter 1: 3-9 – John 20: 19-31

If there is a message that we need to hear at this time, it is a message of hope. If there is a message that permeates our faith as Christians, it is the message of hope.

This first evidence of hope in the life and faith of Christians is found in that hope that is reflected in the early church as we heard in the account from the Acts of the Apostles. As the reality and effect of the Resurrection of Jesus took hold of them, it transformed their lives. It made them radically different even though this led them to be rejected and persecuted. They gladly accepted all that was happening to them because of the hope that their faith gave to them.

Taking to heart the teaching of the Apostles whom they actually had the opportunity to hear, they established a way of living as a community of believers. This enable them to sell what they ha in excess in order to share with those who were in need. They went out from themselves and focused on the needs of others. They were moved to do this because of their common faith based on the Resurrection. Nothing could destroy the true life that they possessed because of their faith in the Resurrection of Jesus. He had overcome the effect of sin that is death. No matter the way they might be viewed by others, their new life in the Resurrection was the most important value in their lives.

The faith of those early members of the Church was a way of life. They often suffered rejection and ridicule from their contemporaries. But they lived with hope and with the encouragement such as we also hear Saint Peter offer in his letter. He pointed out that they would be able to survive even persecution because they believe even though they had not seen the Risen Christ. How much more blessed they would be, as Jesus had proclaimed.

I sometimes suspect that the idealism that is portrayed to us today in the early Christian community can be considered as far-fetched. Even we can reflect skepticism as did Thomas. At times we, too, can be doubtful. Poor Thomas. Over the centuries he has often gotten a bad press. He was unwilling to accept the statements of his friends about what they had experienced. Perhaps he thought them to be deluded. After all, he had left them when they were timid and scared. When he returns, they have a new hope, a new courage, as they speak of having seen the Lord. The skepticism on the part of Thomas is understandable. He needed some proof – physical proof – and it was given to him. But the real proof was not so much in the physical feeling of the wounds but in the loving acceptance extended to him by the Risen Lord in which we, too, share.

As much as Thomas wanted proof that Christ was truly in their midst, so we should look for proof and so should others see proof in us, in the faith and in the hope that we reflect in the way we live. That proof is to be evident in our midst, in us, in the Church that we are. That proof ought to be seen in the manner that we are a community of believers in which the dignity of all persons is recognized, in the care that is shown for others, in the Eucharist that is shared, in the

prayer that is offered. Evidence of this faith and this hope is to be apparent even in the face of trial, such as we experience now.

None of us experience Christ as did the Apostles, as did Thomas. Yet all of us can live our lives in a way that is truly "Blessed." The words of Thomas, "My Lord and my God" are to express the confident hope and trust we have in a truly good and gracious God.