

## Homily – Easter2-B5 by Fr. Gabor

There is a phrase which I will always remember which I learnt at this parish: ‘Trust me I am a Catholic!’ It is a useful and somewhat encouraging phrase, though it doesn’t always convince me about what people say, because I used to be like Thomas in today’s Gospel reading. I didn’t get convinced easily about certain things that people said, unless I double-checked that things were really so, but I have improved a lot and will continue to do so. By the way I am not the only one who was like that, but that doesn’t justify my occasional lack of trust. Faith and trust is a very important decision that we all have to make in every circumstances, as it is the basis of any meaningful progress; faith and trust in each other and especially in the Lord’s promises is absolutely necessary for developing our relationships with him and with one another.

In the Gospel reading Jesus reaches out to the disciples and takes their faith and trust to a new level. These disciples so far only had a faith and trust in a teacher and miracle worker who is subject to death, but now their faith is going to be based on Jesus’ resurrection; ie. now they can believe that there exists something that is more powerful than the teachings and miracles of Jesus; something that is more powerful than unjust death; something that raised Jesus from the dead and that something is in fact in Jesus. He was dead, but now He stands in front of them. Jesus does not explain how this is possible; he simply breathes his Spirit upon them; He shares with them this hidden force, this hidden person who raised Him up; He shares with them eternal life. They died with Him, when they lost Him, and now they receive new life; this is like the creation of Adam; God breathes His Spirit into His body and He comes alive. God breathes His Spirit into the first church and they come alive.

Yesterday we witnessed in St. Columba’s a baby who received the same breath of the Spirit; who through baptism received this same new life. He became so relaxed that he simply fell asleep: what a wonderful and gentle sign of being filled with the Holy Spirit. Well, falling asleep in the pews during the homily is not a sign of the Holy Spirit, but it can be a sign of other things; not necessarily anything about the homily.

Then we see Thomas’ reaction when he hears the wonderful news from the apostles. As yet he had not received the breath of the Spirit from

Jesus; and you can see how stubborn he is and how quick to refuse what the apostles say. But when Jesus appears to Thomas as well we see a very interesting way of bringing someone to faith; Thomas touches the wounds of Jesus; now let's realise that these are not just cut wounds; these are deep, ugly wounds in Jesus' hands and especially in His side. Thomas comes to believe by touching the wounds of God; he realises that this Jesus whom he knew as teacher and miracles worker suffered gravely for Him; so much did Jesus love him. The admired teacher and miracle worker is also someone who knows what it means to suffer and die. Thomas comes to believe in this very important fact and the resurrection of Jesus. 'Through His wounds we are healed', says Isaiah 53:5. Through His wounds Thomas' stubbornness and lack of faith is healed.

Through His wounds the lack of faith is healed in all people who think God is a distant being who does not care about human suffering, who despises those who have committed serious sins. These are lies; no, these wounds are the wounds of a forgiving and welcoming God who tells us: you are forgiven; touch my wounded hand, feel my wound and let's shake hands, let's be reconciled; let go off whatever is bothering you; then come and follow me and I will lead you home to our Father; and nothing will be able to stop us; unless you also forgive those who hurt you and especially yourself, if you have hurt anybody. I will not judge you, so do not judge anybody incl. yourself; rather I want you to be a witness of my mercy so that all people understand who I really am. Do not be afraid of being wounded; my Spirit will heal you, raise you up and get you on your feet. You will be my witness.

And so the disciples become apostles; they are no more just church members and learners, but they also act as people who are sent; sent with the message of mercy and compassion to reach out with mercy and love to those who need forgiveness and welcoming hands.