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2nd Sunday of Easter

Date: Sunday, April 27, 2025 | **Season:** Easter | **Year:** C
First Reading: Acts 5:12–16
Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 118:2–4, 13–15, 22–24 | **Response:** Psalm 118:1
Second Reading: Revelation 1:9–11a, 12–13, 17–19
Gospel Acclamation: John 20:29
Gospel Reading: John 20:19–31
Preached at: the Chapel of the Most Holy Name, Kolvenbach House **in the** Archdiocese of Lusaka, Zambia**.**

They locked the doors. The Gospel tells us this twice, as if to emphasize the sheer finality of their fear. These were not doors gently closed, left ajar for a passing breeze. These were doors bolted, barred, sealed against the world outside. The disciples had seen their Master dragged through the streets, mocked, scourged, and crucified. The Roman Empire had made an example of Him. And if they stepped outside, they knew: they might be next.

But then, in the midst of their fear, He came. Not knocking. Not waiting. He simply stood among them. “Peace be with you,” He said. And it was as if the first rays of morning had burst into the darkened room. As if the new creation—God’s great restoration of the world—had already begun, right there among them.

But one of them was missing. Thomas—forever remembered as “Doubting Thomas”—was not there to see the Lord’s face, to hear His voice, to feel His breath as He spoke. When he returned, and they told him the incredible news, Thomas would not believe. “Unless I see… unless I touch…” His doubt speaks not of cynicism, but of longing. He did not want stories; he wanted Christ.

And how could he not? When we prayerfully contemplate this scene, how can our attention not be drawn to Thomas—dejected, hopeless, perhaps even despairing in his grief? For those of us who know the stinging pain of losing someone we love, how can we not sympathize? How can we not feel the aching emptiness that makes hope seem impossible? Thomas does not doubt because he is hard-hearted; he doubts because he has loved, and he is afraid that love has been lost forever.

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And so, a week later, the doors are locked once more. And again, Jesus comes. This time, He turns directly to Thomas, offering not rebuke, but invitation: “Put your finger here. See My hands. Reach out your hand and put it into My side. Do not doubt but believe.”

The Risen Christ bears the wounds of His passion and invites Thomas to touch them—to discover that love has not ended with death. It has transcended it. It has conquered it. Life has changed, not ended.

And in that moment, the sceptic becomes the saint. “My Lord and my God!” he cries—the first and most direct confession of Christ’s divinity in all the Gospels. What began in doubt ends in worship.

This is the climax of John’s Gospel. The Word that was in the beginning, the Word that was with God, the Word that was God—has now been seen, touched, confessed.

And today, on Divine Mercy Sunday, the Church invites us to stand with Thomas. To bring our doubts, our wounds, our griefs—and to discover that in the pierced Heart of Christ, we are not rejected, but embraced. Today is a feast born from the deep intuition of Saint John Paul II, who saw that after the wounds of Good Friday, the world needed to see the wounds of Christ not as defeat, but as the inexhaustible wells of mercy.

We still mourn the death of Pope Francis, laid to rest yesterday, but his voice still stirs within us, calling us to trust the mercy of God without fear. In his final encyclical, *Dilexit Nos*—He Loved Us—Pope Francis spoke of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, pierced and open, where our names are carved forever by the hand of Love itself.

In those wounds, we are not accused; we are embraced.
In that broken Heart, we are not forgotten; we are remembered into life.
In that suffering made radiant, we are not abandoned; we are carried forward into hope.

And it is hope, above all, that lifts us beyond the present moment, with all its limits and trials. Christ allowed Thomas to see and touch so that he could believe, but he declared blessed those who, without seeing, still trust.
Belief and hope have a strength greater than evidence alone: they dare to pro-

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claim that the future is already being woven by the hands of a faithful God.
Pope Francis lived this hope. He urged us, even in uncertainty and fear, to believe that our lives, our love, our labour are not in vain.
The Risen Christ carries us forward—not only as individuals, but together as a Church—into a future where love is stronger than death.

This is the gift Christ offers to Thomas. This is the gift He offers to us.

And look at what happens to those first disciples. In the Acts of the Apostles, Peter and the others walk the streets of Jerusalem healing the sick, casting out demons, proclaiming the name of Jesus. And the people bring out their sick into the streets just so that Peter's shadow might fall on them as he passes by. The very presence of these disciples radiates the resurrection. The world has been remade—and they are living proof.

And then there is John, exiled on the island of Patmos. Even there, even in isolation, he encounters the Risen Christ—not behind locked doors, but in a vision of glory: "Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore."

There it is again—Easter's great proclamation: He was dead. But death could not hold Him.

But what of us? We have not stood in that upper room. We have not placed our fingers in His wounds. And yet, His words echo across the centuries: "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

We, too, live in a world that locks its doors. Out of fear. Out of exhaustion. Out of grief. In Zambia, we see poverty and inequality that cry out for justice. We see corruption that twists the truth. We see the weak trampled by the strong. And it is easy to ask: where is Christ? Where is the resurrection here?

But this is the promise of Easter: He comes, even through locked doors. He speaks peace into our fears. He breathes His Spirit into the weary. He offers mercy to the merciless. And He sends us forth—not to remain in rooms of safety, but to go out, to be His hands and feet in a world still longing for resurrection. This is not a call to complacency. This is not a call to retreat into our comfortable spaces. Rather, it is a call to live as His body in a world desperately in need of

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healing, justice, and love. We are sent as agents of mercy—not just to forgive the wrongs done to us, but to extend the mercy of God to those who seem undeserving, just as Christ extended mercy to us, even while we were still sinners.

And we see that mercy is working across the world today. In Zambia, at the Mass for Pope Francis in Lusaka, a simple handshake between the President and the Archbishop became a profound symbol of reconciliation and peace. Despite the challenges and divisions within the country, that moment echoed the message of mercy and healing that Pope Francis championed. It is a reminder that God's mercy can bridge even the deepest divides.

Similarly, just yesterday, at the funeral of Pope Francis, in St. Peter's Basilica itself, President Trump and President Zelensky, two world leaders who have known deep conflict in recent months, shared a brief but meaningful conversation as they awaited the Requiem Mass. These moments—seemingly small, yet deeply significant—speak to the truth that, even in death, Pope Francis' prayer for peace and reconciliation is being answered. God's mercy is reaching even the hardest of hearts, crossing borders, and healing wounds in ways that we may not always see, but are nonetheless real.

The Church is not a refuge from the world. It is the Risen Body of Christ in the world. That is what the Acts of the Apostles shows us. That is what our Catholic Social Teaching calls us to embrace. The Risen Christ commissions us—just as He did the first disciples—to stand with the poor, to defend the dignity of every person, to heal, to serve, to proclaim: Christ is risen! Death is defeated! And that is not an abstraction. It is as real as Thomas' touch. As real as Peter's shadow. As real as the fire that still burns in our hearts every time we find the strength to cooperate with God's grace to reconcile.

So now, in this Easter season, I invite you to take these questions into prayer, into your examen, into your daily life:

- Where are the locked doors in my life? What fears, doubts, or wounds am I hiding away from Christ?
- How is the Risen Jesus inviting me to experience His mercy and peace more deeply—especially where I struggle to believe?
- Where am I being sent? Who is Christ asking me to reach out to, to serve, to show the living reality of His resurrection?

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This is the Easter journey. This is the new creation. The tomb is empty. The doors are open. Christ is alive. And in Him, so are we. Let us confess our faith, as Thomas did, by saying and believing: “My Lord and my God!”

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In preparing this homily, I consulted various resources to deepen my understanding of today’s readings, including using Magisterium AI for assistance. The final content remains the responsibility of the author.