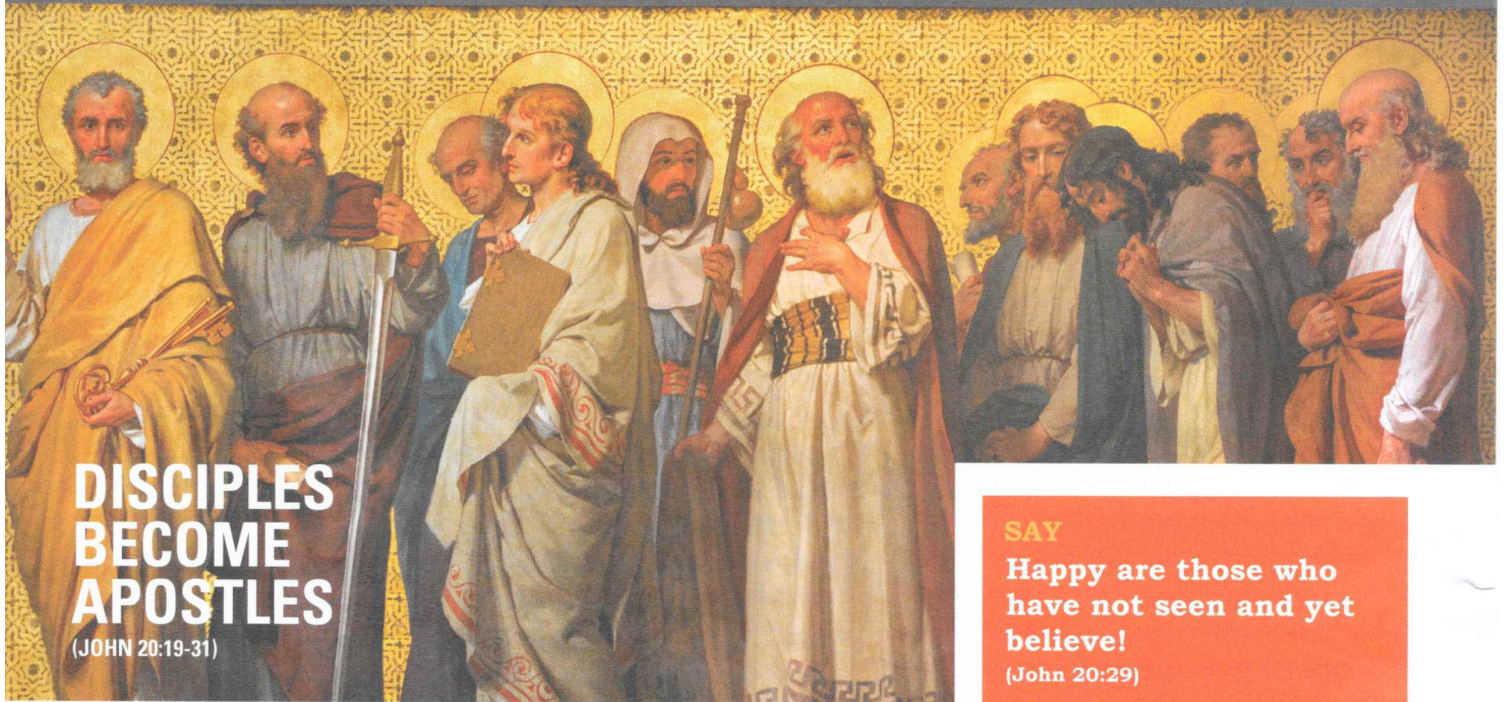


19 APRIL 2020 **2ND SUNDAY OF EASTER (DIVINE MERCY)**

Sunday Message

THE WORD

Year A • Psalter Week 2



Fresco of the twelve apostles by Enrico Reffo (1914), in Chiesa di San Dalmazzo, Turin, Italy.

In the first scene of our Gospel reading today, the risen Jesus reveals himself to his fearful disciples: he breathes the Holy Spirit onto them and sends them to continue his mission.

Up to this point in the Fourth Gospel, the disciples have had no share in Jesus' ministry, and their faith in him has been incomplete. They have heard from Mary Magdalene that the Lord is risen, but now they have experienced him for themselves. Their reaction of being filled with joy tells us that they have accepted the truth of the resurrection and so their journey from conditional to unconditional faith is accomplished. They are to witness to Jesus now that he is no longer with them physically.

This Gospel passage is not so much concerned with the historical disciples themselves as with those who will come to believe through their word. Hence the figure of Thomas represents those who will be told by others about Jesus, but will find it hard to believe: they will only accept the message after questioning and searching without having a visual experience of Jesus. So the words Jesus speaks underline this, when he pronounces the one beatitude we find in the Fourth Gospel: "Happy are those who have not seen and yet believe." ■

SAY

Happy are those who have not seen and yet believe!

(John 20:29)

DO

As you leave the church, and your home, imagine a sign above the door which says, "Welcome to your mission field!"

LEARN

The forgiving or retaining of sins mentioned in today's Gospel refers to the person accepting or declining baptism.

Thomas' scepticism has a positive result: it leads him to an encounter with the risen Lord.

To believe in Jesus is ultimately a personal decision.

REFLECT

Many parents find it hard when their children give up the practice of the faith. Despite their best efforts, there comes a point when the younger ones decide that what they have been taught either does not make sense to them or that it does not matter. Even very young children can decide that organised religion is not for them. There are many reasons why people give up the outward expression of the faith into which they were baptised, probably as an infant: in the past, there were certain social pressures to go to church which do not exist any more.

Sometimes we hear talk about whether the activity of the Church (or parish) is best described as "mission or maintenance". The model which Jesus gives in the Gospel today is mission: his disciples are not to stay in the place where they are and celebrate their belief in him simply among themselves, but they are to go out and spread his message. Those who accept freely their witness will signify this outwardly by being baptised and thus having their sins forgiven and living the Easter life of the risen Lord. No one can make this decision for anyone else. No catechetical

programme can guarantee success: all we can do is to present what we believe and entrust the result to the Holy Spirit.

There is obviously a hunger among people for a deeper meaning in life. Very often, the interest of someone who enquires about the faith is sparked off by meeting someone who is committed and who gives the impression of having found such a meaning. We do not have to leave home to be missionary disciples: the mission field is all around us. ■