



# parish newsletter

Second Sunday of Easter – Divine Mercy Sunday (Year B) | 11 April 2021

## Reflecting on the Gospel



What a wonderful joy fills us today as we ponder the inexhaustible mercy of God. "Mercy is the heart of God," Pope Francis tells us.

The image of a heart has been used to point to the very life source of a person as it is the organ that allows life to flow through

our veins and sustain us. Mercy is the heart of God. Imagine this dynamic, powerful, compassionate, piercing, embracing, lov-

ing, propelling, penetrating, absorbing, and enveloping, transforming presence of God flowing into the very depth of our

souls. It is God's mercy that allows blood to flow through our veins. It is God's mercy that forms every atom of our being and leads us to what is true. God's mercy reveals all superficiality and falsehood, and lays bare all distortions, empty promises, weakness, and sin.

"Mercy is the force that reawakens us to new life and instils in us the courage to look to the future with hope," Pope Francis continues. God's all forgiving, compassionate love is with us. When we finally believe and accept that Christ's resurrected transfigured presence resides with us, we then find within us a strong confidence to accept life's imperfections and disappointments and move on. Every day is a new adventure in new life. God leaves the past behind and opens doors to the future. It doesn't matter how many mistakes we made yesterday. All that matters is what we do tomorrow and what we learn along the way. It is so easy to remain

tethered and mired in the past, but there is no need to do so. God is all about tomorrow and the work God has yet to do in our lives.

Mercy gives birth to hope for the greatest of sinners and for the worst of disasters. There is nothing God cannot do and nothing God cannot fashion. After all, everything we know and treasure was once nothing, and look what God did with the nothing God had! The resurrected Christ stands before us with nail marks in his wrists and wounds on his body as a testament that not even injustice, suffering and death can trample over and destroy God's mercy. What have we to fear? Why do we keep ourselves from peace? Our lack of faith prevents us from going forward and fully receiving the holiness God desires to breathe upon us. Breathe in God's mercy, allow the wind of God's presence to kiss all of your sins and caress all of your fears. Exhale peace.

## Everyday Stewardship

**Tracey Earl Welliver, MTS**

They say seeing is believing. But if you've ever ordered a trousers of pants online, you know that's not always the case. Whatever the photos promise us, what looked like a perfectly nice shade of navy blue on our computer screens comes in the mail as an unusual shade of blue green that only appears in the giant box of Crayola crayons.

The Apostle Thomas, who couldn't bring himself to accept that Jesus had risen from the dead without seeing him,

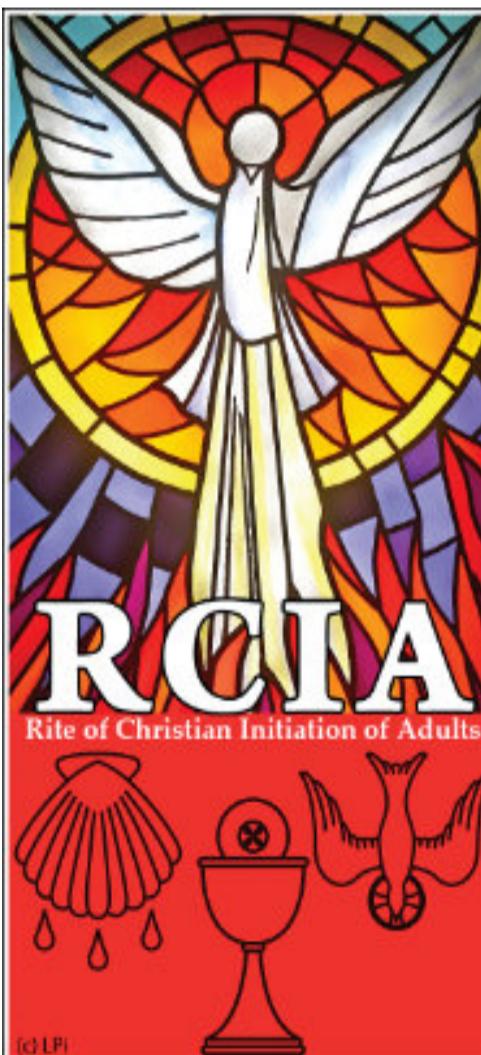
is such an utterly relatable figure in the Gospels. Thomas is still reeling from a loss — not only of his good friend but his Lord, who was taken prisoner and crucified before his eyes. Thomas is guarding himself. He's not believing the hype. He's going to be the only judge of what is real and what is fiction.

Would any of us be any different? We've all had those thoughts. Can we believe it all — Jesus, salvation history, the Eucharist — when we haven't seen it with our own two eyes?

That's when we need to remember that those two eyes were absolutely positive they had ordered a pair of navy blue trousers.

It's easy for us to sit back stroking our chins in judgement at Thomas, "you didn't believe the testimony of your friends!" But do we accept the testimony of our friends? The saints, the popes, the Church fathers themselves?

Sometimes the things that are most worthy of believing can't be seen with the naked eye.



## Live the Liturgy

Alleluia! Forgiveness has risen from the grave! What a wonderful joy fills us today as we ponder the inexhaustible mercy of God. When experienced, we are moved to do all in our power to avoid sin and embrace the loving presence of our risen God. God stands ever ready to receive us and wants nothing more than for us to come home. How reluctant we are to believe this truth! We want proof, tangible evidence and absolute assurance that what we have been told is true. Jesus has risen from the dead and brings us peace. It is the gift of wholeness and holiness that is breathed upon us by God's life-giving and healing mercy. May the rays of love that flow from the heart of Christ pierce ours!

*Congratulations to Navpreet on her Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Communion*



### First Reading

With great power the apostles bore witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great favour was accorded them all. (Acts 4:33)

### Psalm

Give thanks to the Lord for he is good, for his love has no end. (Ps 118)

### Second Reading

Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is begotten by God, and everyone who loves the Father loves also the one begotten by him. (1 Jn 1:1a)

### Gospel Acclamation

Alleluia, alleluia!  
Jesus said: 'You believe because you can see me. Happy are those who have not seen and yet believe.'  
Alleluia!

### Gospel

Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." (Jn 20:21)

# Masses this Week

11	SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER	Acts 4:32-35/Ps 118:2-4, 13-15, 22-24 [1]/1 Jn 5:1-6/Jn 20:19-3 10.30 Mass St Mary's Dora Tye (RIP) 17.00 Mass St Mary's People of the Parish
12	Monday St Martin	Acts 4:23-31/Ps 2:1-3, 4-7a, 7b-9 [cf. 11d]/Jn 3:1-8 12.05 Mass St Mary's Sr M Cyril (RIP)
13	Tuesday	Acts 4:32-37/Ps 93:1ab, 1cd-2, 5 [1a]/Jn 3:7b-15 12.05 Mass St Mary's Tom Simmons (RIP)
14	Wednesday	Acts 5:17-26/Ps 34:2-3, 4-5, 6-7, 8-9 [7a]/Jn 3:16-21 12.05 Mass St Mary's Joseph and Olive Jukes (RIP)
14	Thursday	Acts 5:27-33/Ps 34:2 and 9, 17-18, 19-20 [7a]/Jn 3:31-36 12.05 Mass St Mary's Nora Kelly (RIP)
16	Friday St Bernadette	Acts 5:34-42/Ps 27:1, 4, 13-14 [cf. 4abc]/Jn 6:1-15 12.05 Mass St Mary's Veronica and John Whiting (RIP)
17	Saturday	Acts 6:1-7/Ps 33:1-2, 4-5, 18-19 [22]/Jn 6:16-21 11.00 Mass St Mary's Ints of Hazel & Glen Daroczy 18:00 Vigil Mass St Cecilia's Cecilia Finn (RIP)
18	THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER	Acts 3:13-15, 17-19/Ps 4:2, 4, 7-8, 9 [7a]/1 Jn 2:1-5a/Lk 24:35-48 10.30 Mass St Mary's Margaret Atkinson 17.00 Mass St Mary's People of the Parish

## News & Announcements

### Holy Week 2021

Thank-you to everyone who helped to make this year's celebration of Holy Week so special. Even though the regulations meant that the way we marked the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus was different from what we are used to, it was a gift to be able to gather together as a community and walk with Jesus on his journey from the cross to the tomb to the resurrection.

### Rewiring of St Mary's

Work is progressing well on the rewiring project. From Easter Monday (5 April) St Mary's Church will be closed while the new lights are installed and scaffolding is erected in the body of the church. Weekday Mass that week will be in the Catholic Centre on Bridge Street.

### Gift Aid Envelopes

The envelopes for the new financial year are available at the back of the church for collection. Please take yours if you haven't already.

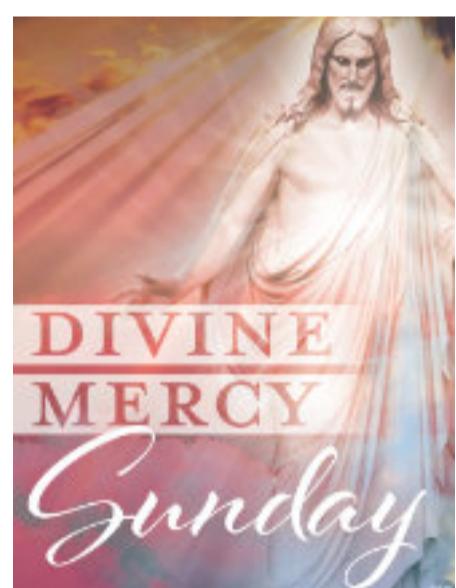
The stewardship committee will be preparing a financial report to share with parishioners in the next few weeks. It is important that we all know how much the parish raises and how that money is spent. This is especially important because of the financial problems the coronavirus and the lockdowns caused.

We are fortunate that so many parishioners decided to set up a standing order for their weekly collection. That, along with the gift aid envelopes and the loose collection has helped cushion the financial impact of 2020, and kept us able to pay our bills. Thank-you for your generosity.

of the world.

Her story and her diaries began circulating in Poland and beyond. It quickly became apparent that this was a holy young woman, and the cause for her canonisation opened. In the year 2000, she was canonised by the first-ever Polish pope, St. John Paul II. On her canonisation day, he established the second Sunday of Easter as Divine Mercy Sunday, "a perennial invitation to the Christian world to face, with confidence in divine benevolence, the difficulties and trials that mankind with experience in the years to come."

important here: Thomas' story shows that doubt is not the opposite of faith. Doubt is kind of like the fertiliser of faith. Socrates said the un-reflected life was not worth living. I would say the same applies to faith. Doubting and questioning don't always mean I believe any less, they can mean that I want to believe more. 'Lord, I believe, help my unbelief!', the man in the Gospel prayed. St Thomas also shows how doubt can lead to faith.



## Divine Mercy

If you were born well before the year 2000, you know the feast of Divine Mercy has not always been celebrated in the Church. In the early 1900s, a young Polish nun began receiving private revelations. Jesus appeared to her during her times of prayer, speaking a message of mercy and love for the world. She received a set of prayers—the Divine Mercy Chaplet—and the request to have a feast day established to remind the Church of the mercy of God. St. Faustina died in 1938, on the cusp of war and in the midst of one of the most violent centuries in the history

misses his astonishing profession of faith: 'My Lord and my God'. In those five simple words Thomas is able to sum up the whole of our Christian faith. Thomas' profession of faith is quietly repeated by millions of Catholics every time they gaze upon the consecrated bread and wine at Mass. Over the centuries those words have passed the lips of martyrs and mothers, of great saints and lowly believers alike. Those are the words of Believing Thomas, not Doubting Thomas.

I think there's something else im-

I think it is so unfair that St Thomas has gone down in history as 'Doubting Thomas'. When I'm Pope, I'm going to officially change his name to 'Believing Thomas'! Yes, his faith wobbled a bit, but you can hardly blame him for that. The resurrection was so completely and utterly beyond the apostles' comprehension is it any wonder he had trouble accepting it when he first heard it? Would any of us be any different?

To focus on his doubt, however,

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Rev Eddy Barker, Parish Deacon

Canon Alexander Barrass, Priest in Residence



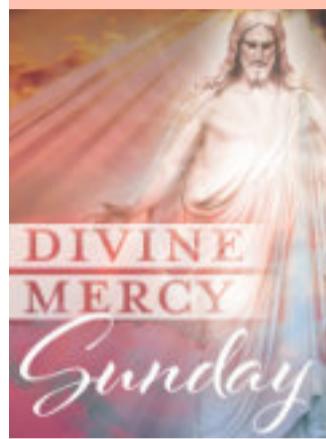
A parish of the Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle  
Reg Charity 1143450



Christopher, Paula, Liz,  
Peter, Emilia, Jean,  
Teresa and Cath.



Those whose  
anniversaries occur at  
this time.



## Questions for the Week

**First Reading:** Luke gives us a glimpse into the solidarity of heart and mind with the original community of believers in Jerusalem. How does your current community of faith compare to this first-generation Jerusalem church?

**Second Reading:** John speaks of the power of faith and love for believers in conquering evil in the world. How does the faith and love in your life sustain you?

**Gospel:** The story of Thomas' doubt in the resurrected Jesus is one of the most well-known resurrection narratives. Why do you think Christians throughout the ages are drawn to this story?



## Why do we do that?



**Question:** Do we need to fast for one hour before Mass, or one hour before communion?

**Answer:** The practice of fasting before receiving the Eucharist is a centuries-old act of devotion that

was once very different than it is today. In the 1917 Code of Canon Law, for example, anyone who wanted to receive the Eucharist had to fast from midnight until the time of communion (even water and medications were forbidden). Over the following decades, the rules for the Eucharistic fast were relaxed, first by Pope Pius XII and, later, by Pope Saint Paul VI.

The current Code of Canon Law (1983) states very clearly: "A person who is to receive the Most Holy Eucharist is to abstain for at least one hour before holy communion from any food and drink, except for only water and medicine" (Canon 919, §1). And, in the case of those who are ill and the elderly, the rules are even more accommodating, "The elderly, the infirm, and those who care for them can receive the Most Holy Eucharist even if they have eaten something within the preceding hour" (Canon 919, §3).

So, if we strictly follow the "letter of the law," the fast is calculated from the time of Holy Communion and not the start of Mass. However, when we remember why we fast — it is a reminder of the deeper hungers of the spirit that our physical thirst or hunger symbolise — we see that the issue is much bigger than simply fulfilling what is called for by Church Law and tradition. Joining fasting to our prayers and reflection before Mass is an opportunity to really centre ourselves and to prepare our minds, hearts, and bodies to welcome the One we receive in the Eucharist.

### A Prayer to Be Open to God's Will

Good and gracious God, I know that life can be unpredictable. Sometimes I know what is good and right, but I don't have the courage to do it. Sometimes I am so busy with my own affairs, I forget to see the needs of people in front of me. Sometimes I am set in my own ways, and I resist growing and learning. Help me, Lord, to be open to Your will. When You prompt me to do the right thing, give me the courage to do it. When those around me need my help, give me Your heart to love them. When I'm stuck in my own ways, give me the grace to grow closer to You every day. Give me the trust and confidence of Mary. Let it be done unto me according to Your word!

Amen