

I Easter 2022  
Sermon – Saint Joseph Parish  
Father Craig Looney  
*1 St. John 5.4-12 St. John 20.19-23*  
*The Nicene Creed*

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*"I look for the Resurrection of the dead; and the life of the world to come"...words of the Nicene Creed we say together at every Sunday Mass. We say the Creed corporately...but we say..."I believe"...not "we believe"...it is our individual profession of faith.*

This morning's Gospel picks up where we left off last week...with the Apostles hiding behind locked doors. They had just seen their friend, Jesus, executed by the Romans on a trumped-up charge of treason. They feared for their own lives...maybe the religious leaders considered them guilty by association because they were followers of Jesus.

The Apostles had not yet understood...the Gospel tells us...that Jesus rose from the dead. We believe he did because of the eyewitness testimonies of those who saw him and talked with him after the Resurrection, not because Mary Magdalene and the others discovered his grave was empty.

It's late in the evening the first Easter Day. Jesus appears to the disciples without knocking on the door and asking to be let in. The locked door didn't stop Jesus from entering the room in his Resurrected body. His sudden appearance startled the disciples. The first thing he says to them is "Peace be with you"...in modern speak..."Calm down".

Jesus might have thought the disciples needed more convincing it really was him and not a ghost...he shows them the marks in his hands and side. His Resurrected body still bore the forensic evidence of his execution. The Gospel records Jesus telling them a second time to calm down. They were filled with joy and gladness at seeing their Friend again.

Absent from the scene is Thomas...perhaps hiding in his own house. He didn't believe the other disciples when they told him they had seen Jesus. He wanted proof...he wanted to see the scars left by the nails and touch the wound in Jesus' side. Only then would he believe. We've all heard the expression "a doubting Thomas"...referring to a skeptic who

refuses to believe something is true without direct personal experience.

Thomas confessed Jesus to be his Lord and God but only after he saw the empirical evidence of the Crucifixion on Jesus' body. Jesus told Thomas to stop his doubting and believe. Jesus also said how happy are those who believe without seeing him. We believe and see Jesus operating in our lives and the lives of others every day.

Jesus then breathed on the disciples and said, *"Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive people's sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven"*. Jesus was preparing the disciples to become *Apostoloi...Apostles...the Sent Out Ones*. They would go out into the world to do his work just as he had been sent to do his father's work.

These are the very same words the Bishop says when he places his hands on a man at his ordination to the priesthood. Priests have a particular mission to follow Peter and the other Apostles in teaching and administering the Sacraments and in loving the people in the same way Jesus loves them. Forgiving people's sins in Jesus' Name is not a matter of personal choice for the priest...it is a sacred duty. He is doing exactly what Jesus told the Apostles to do...acting in his stead...and in his Name.

The disciples were happy to see their Friend, Jesus, once more, before he went back to heaven. They saw Jesus in his Resurrected body and heard his reassuring voice giving them his peace...only the peace Jesus can give. Even though we have not yet seen Jesus in his Resurrected body, we are happy too, and love and adore him.

In the Epistle, John writes God has given us eternal life and this life has its source in his Son, Jesus, and whoever has the Son has this life. Eternal life in Jesus begins now and will be fully realized when we see him for ourselves in heaven.

Today we can say with hope and confidence...

*"I look for the Resurrection of the dead; and the life of the world to come".*

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