



BENEDICTINE SISTERS OF CHICAGO

Second Sunday of Easter – April 7, 2024

Reflection by Judith Murphy, OSB

First Reading: Acts 4:32-35

Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 118:2-4, 13-15, 22-24

Second Reading: 1 John 5:1-6

Gospel: John 20:19-31

Looking at this morning's readings reminded me of something said offhandedly at a recent Leadership Conference of Women Religious assembly: "We could consider doing *mystagogical catechesis* on our experiences with COVID."

That sent me back to checking on the meaning of *mystagogical catechesis*. The term was introduced in the '70s as part of explaining the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, a renewed understanding of adult baptism. It means coaching the newly baptized to draw from their experience with the sacraments of initiation... to draw from the sacramental experience a new sense of the faith, of the church, and of the world. It meant taking 5-7 days during Easter week to consider the experience the newly baptized had been through, and to reveal the deeper significance of the initiation experience and the deeper meaning of sacramental life in Christ.

Our rich celebration of Holy Week and the Triduum Tenebrae lessons so pertinent again this year in our world relating to current day famine and other atrocities of war and poverty, and the sobering considerations about our life in community and future housing, along with our having experienced the impact of COVID... *mystagogical catechetics* can bring us to a new sense of vocation and of faith, of the church, and of our world, and the meaning of our sacramental life in Christ. Every celebration of Eucharist offers us the opportunity to embrace that reality. I'm reminded of how often our Mary Benet said that we too are called to be open to being body broken and blood poured out.

In the gospel reading, we see that on the first day of the week, the apostles—who had been scattered and afraid—locked in a room for fear of the authorities who had summoned them and told them to stop talking about Jesus,... they were found in that locked room by Jesus, who showed them himself. Imagine the follow-up conversations among them: their gladness, what they told Thomas, his diffidence...and their becoming a faith group in that sharing, so that when Jesus showed up there again a week later to show himself to them again—this time with Thomas also there, and they began shaping the story that they would go forth and tell.

And we hear in John's first letter, written after years of the story being told in the faith community and shaped into a theology of faith and the love of neighbor that we are called to. And the selection from Acts told by another writer after years of reflection and sharing the story, this writer also tells the same story again. And contemporary historians of the era observed that it was common knowledge that these Christians loved one another. Peace be with you!

Tony Gittens - who taught missiology at Catholic Theological Union - in this month's *Give Us This Day* missalette describes this "*Peace be With You*" as a "performative utterance": The **words actually bring about the outcome**. Gittens says, "Jesus is not at all saying the equivalent of 'Have a nice day' or offering a simple conventional greeting. He is doing something very profound."

Everyone in that room is struggling to come to terms with the recent events. They are not at peace with themselves, nor with each other—particularly the petulant and absent Thomas. The air must be electric with their mistrust and recriminations. Yet Jesus does not upbraid them. He brings his peace into that room and into the heart and soul of each person there. The peace of which he talks is the peace the world cannot give because the world does not know it (cf. John 14:27). This is a "**God-gift**": the gift is God, the God of peace.

Peace Be With You!