

Sunday Homily

2nd SUNDAY OF EASTER

24 APRIL 2022

YEAR C

“As the Father has sent me, so I send you.”

John 20:21

Illustration

To smooth the path of social communication we have various stock phrases to show that we really mean what we say: “I give you my word”; “My word is my bond”, and so on. In courts of justice, a Christian reinforces an oath with the action of placing a hand on the Bible as proof of meaning what is said. Sadly we live in a world in which people’s words, even promises, are frequently not enough to convince. Marriage vows can be broken. Business contracts are fractured, sometimes even by deception and fraud. The course of legal justice can be hampered by dishonest evidence, even that given under oath. Experience teaches us that words are fine, they can be given freely and often honestly. We can want to be convinced, especially when the speaker means a lot to us. But marriage vows made in all sincerity can later become broken under the strain of a failing relationship. So ultimately for people in uncertain situations it is concrete proof that convinces. Since we can never be really sure of someone else’s ability to remain faithful to their word, can we blame anyone asking for proof?

Gospel Teaching

In today’s Gospel narrative we hear how Thomas is faced with two problems. The first was listening to his friends telling him that he had missed the most incredible event of their lives, and having to decide if he trusted them enough to believe them. (And even perhaps feeling annoyed or hurt that he had been elsewhere when it happened.) The second was accepting the staggering possibility that his Lord Jesus had risen from the dead. The apostles said they had seen Jesus in the flesh. How could he have been sure that this was so? The consequences of what they were saying were incalculable. The last time he had seen Jesus he had been dragged away to be crucified. Of this much he was sure. This was hard evidence. It would take more than words from his excited friends to convince him. After all, how would we feel to be told that a dead loved one was alive again? It defeats logic.

When they met face to face, Jesus offered Thomas the evidence he sought. Jesus did not seem to mind that his previous appearance had not been sufficient to convince Thomas; he knows our weaknesses. But for Thomas the meeting was much more significant than an exercise in overcoming his doubt. The fact of Jesus arising from the dead said more about his true identity than any word

or action during his ministry. Only God can raise or be raised from death, only God has the key to life. Thomas recognised Jesus fully and completely as “My Lord and my God!” Words alone could never have convinced him of this, only a personal encounter with the risen Christ. An encounter which changed his life for ever.

Application

People today will not generally simply accept our word for the reason for our hope, and their scepticism is understandable. Words could never properly describe the power of a relationship with the living God. Jesus may send us out, just like Thomas and the other disciples, to continue the work of bringing God’s love into the world. But we have to offer our listeners something other than verbal assurances that there is more to life than that which they already experience.

But how are people to know that Jesus is alive unless they encounter it in our lives? Why should people believe us when we say that new life, eternal life, is on offer to all unless they see evidence of this in the way we live? How can people trust that God loves them unless we manage to make that love tangible, not just empty words?

Talk is cheap. The message of new life, of love or hope is credible only if people can actually experience it through us. Jesus did not send us out simply to tell others about the Gospel: he asks us to live out that good news, to give it flesh and blood, just as he did. When we do that, then we too become people whose joy, trust, hope and fearlessness are magnetic and infectious, drawing others to Christ through what they see in us. We become people whose word can be doubly trusted, as people see how we live that faith which gives us such abundant life, and how that faith is grounded in God.