

**Homily — Second Sunday of Easter, 2018**  
**by Rev. Bob Schramm, OSFS**

Today's first reading paints a charming picture  
of the early Christian community at Jerusalem:  
It says the previously wimpy, cowardly apostles  
boldly bore witness to Christ's resurrection.  
It says that the whole community was of one mind and heart.  
It says their possessions were held in common and no one went without.  
Sounds kind of like socialism to me,  
but let's not get into that one right now.

Today's Gospel story paints a different picture from the lovely one in Acts.  
It says that things in the Jerusalem community  
may not have been as rosy as the account in Acts might lead us to believe.  
It seems that there was some disquiet, some fear,  
some terrible disappointment, even some division in this community.  
Jesus' first word to them in this Gospel story is "PEACE,"  
— perhaps because there was disquiet rather than peace.  
And it is forgiveness that Jesus next addresses:  
"If you forgive others' sins, they are forgiven them;  
if you hold them bound, they are held bound."  
Maybe because there was some forgiving that needed to go on there.

Halfway through today's Gospel narrative,  
we have this rather jarring account about Thomas  
— perhaps he's the Church's first heretic.  
"I'll not believe it unless I put my finger into the nail marks  
and my hand into his side."

Notice that there is no evidence of Thomas storming out  
of the room at that point.  
Nor is there evidence that the community, in effect, throws him out on his ear.

Obviously there is division here,  
but there is also openness and humility.  
Such must be the nature of the Church if we are to claim to be  
the body of the risen Christ.

**Our divisions are wounding our ability to witness to the peace  
that Jesus means to bring to the world.**

**Now does this mean that anything goes,  
that there is no cause or truth worth standing up for  
and making divisions over?**

**The next scene offers a pathway for navigating this painful divide.**

**Suddenly the narrator brings us to a scene a week later.  
And Thomas is there with the others.  
Somehow, despite their differences, despite the presence of this dissenter,  
the community has been able to hold Thomas bound tightly in its heart.  
And Thomas has not excluded himself from the community  
either in despair or in arrogant superiority.**

**Jesus joins them again.  
In effect he says to Thomas, "Enter my wounds:  
the wounds of my humanity, of my Church,  
of my crucified, my risen, my mystical body."**

**And the reply of Thomas, the doubter, the unbeliever, the skeptic?  
In the strongest text of the New Testament claiming the divinity of Christ,  
Thomas says, "My Lord and my God."  
Such is the transformative power of resurrection faith.  
— without ignoring our divisions, nor naively glossing over them.**

**"These words have been recorded to help you believe  
that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God,  
so that through this faith you may have life in his name."**

**Let's come back for a moment to where we began,  
to that lovely story about the Jerusalem community being of one mind and  
heart . Does everything we've said here simply indicate that story was fantasy.  
In some sense the answer is both "Yes" and "No."**

**There may never have been a Jerusalem that fully embodied this ideal.  
The truth is, however, that every Christian community is meant  
to strive for this ideal, to be the embodiment of this kind of sharing and caring.**