

Peace be with you

Notes on the Bible readings

- 'Peace be with you' is an exhortation shared on several occasions throughout the Gospels, usually when there is great news about to be shared. This is not the quiet peace of the status quo, of life as normal; this is the disruptive yet reassuring peace that comes because Jesus is risen from the dead. It is the beginning of something new.

- This also comes near the end of the Gospel where John shares the reasoning behind writing his account. The arc of this narrative then reaches from the first century right out to us: 'These are written so that you may come to believe...and that through believing you may have life in his name.' The purpose of this story pushes ever outwards, bringing life to the world through our response.

- Thomas was unable to take someone's word for the resurrection, but needed to touch and interact with Jesus in order to believe and declare, 'My Lord and my God!'

- In embracing Christ for themselves, the disciples were then able to go and share that invitation with others. We are invited to receive the embrace of Jesus for ourselves: what are we doing to help others receive and respond to that same invitation?

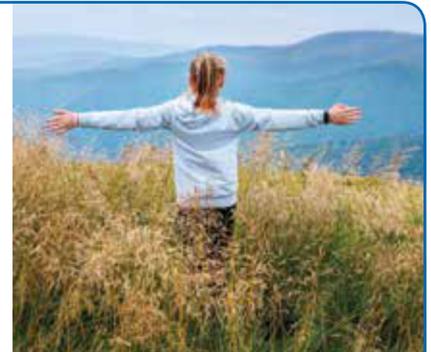
Imagine the resurrection

Search the internet to find an image of the resurrection - e.g. Caravaggio's 'The incredulity of Saint Thomas'. Play instrumental music with a resurrection theme - e.g. the non-vocal section of the last movement of Mahler's Symphony No. 2 'Resurrection' - while looking at the image. Try to imagine seeing the risen Jesus for the first time, as Thomas did. What would you say? What might Jesus say to you? Would you want to touch him, as he invited Thomas to do?

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Questions for reflection

- ▶ How would you feel about sharing this moment with someone?
- ▶ What practical difference does it make having accepted Jesus into your life?
- ▶ What experiences make you feel most 'at peace'?



A prayer of confession

*Prince of peace, we are sorry
that we choose not to forgive but to hold grudges;
that we doubt you and do not trust;
that we rely so often on our own resources and not on you;
that we believe only when we have proof.
Help us to forgive more readily, and to trust more willingly.
Amen.*

A prayer for others

Heavenly Father, we pray for all the places in the world that need your peace: places where the ongoing pandemic threatens the stability of nations; places where war and violence continues to cause so much pain and destruction; places where homes, livelihoods and families have been destroyed, and lives lost.

Give wisdom to world leaders - to presidents and prime ministers, to politicians of all persuasions - that they may strive for lasting peace and true justice, not putting personal ambitions before the needs of their people, especially in this time of global crisis.

*We pray for those who need peace of mind: those weighed down by the stresses and strains of life, or who suffer with anxiety, or are oppressed by worry and fear in the difficult times; for those who find it hard to let go of things and simply trust in you.
Amen.*

A personal prayer

Let me feel the touch of peace and life, the touch of the risen Lord, beside me, behind me, and before me all the days of my life. Amen.

Live your faith

Are there people you have 'lost touch' with - either in general, or due to the current restrictions? Seek to renew a connection with someone this week; call and say 'Peace be with you'.