

COLLECT

Almighty Father,
 you have given your only Son to die for our
 sins
 and to rise again for our justification:
 grant us so to put away the leaven of malice
 and wickedness
 that we may always serve you
 in pureness of living and truth;
 through the merits of your Son Jesus Christ
 our Lord,
 who is alive and reigns with you,
 in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
 one God, now and for ever.

FIRST READING

(Alternative readings)

The reading from Acts must be used as either the first or second reading.

Acts 2:14a. 22-32

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles.

On the day of Pentecost, Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd, "You that are Israelites, listen to what I have to say: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with deeds of power, wonders, and signs that God did through him among you, as you yourselves know – this man, handed over to you according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of those outside the law. But God raised him up, having freed him from death, because it was impossible for him to be held in its power. For David says concerning him, 'I saw the Lord always before me, for he is at my right hand so that I will not be shaken; therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced; moreover my flesh will live in hope. For you will not abandon my soul to Hades, or let your Holy One experience corruption. You have made known to me the ways of life; you will make me full of gladness with your presence.' Fellow Israelites, I may say to you confidently of our ancestor David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. Since he was a prophet, he knew that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would put one of his descendants on his throne. Foreseeing this, David spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, saying, 'He was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh experience corruption.' This Jesus God raised up, and of that all of us are witnesses."

Or **Exodus 14:10-end; 15:20-21**

PSALM Psalm 16

R *The Lord is at my right hand; I shall not fall.*

Preserve me, O God, for in you have I taken refuge;
 I have said to the Lord, "You are my lord, all my good depends on you."
 All my delight is upon the godly that are in the land,
 upon those who are noble in heart. **R**

Though the idols are legion that many run after,
 their drink offerings of blood I will not offer,
 neither make mention of their names upon my lips.
 The Lord himself is my portion and my cup;
 in your hands alone is my fortune. **R**

My share has fallen in a fair land;
 indeed, I have a goodly heritage.
 I will bless the Lord who has given me counsel,
 and in the night watches he instructs my heart. **R**

I have set the Lord always before me;
 he is at my right hand; I shall not fall.
 Wherefore my heart is glad and my spirit rejoices;
 my flesh also shall rest secure. **R**

For you will not abandon my soul to Death,
 nor suffer your faithful one to see the Pit.
 You will show me the path of life;
 in your presence is the fullness of joy
 and in your right hand are pleasures for evermore. **R**

SECOND READING

(Alternative readings)

Either 1 Peter 1:3-9

A reading from the first letter of Peter

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who are being protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you rejoice, even if now for a little while you have had to suffer various trials, so that the genuineness of your faith – being more precious than gold that, though perishable, is tested by fire – may be found to result in praise and glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed. Although you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him

now, you believe in him and rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy, for you are receiving the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

Or **Acts 2:14a. 22-32** (as above)

GOSPEL John 20:19-end

Hear the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John.

When it was evening on the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained." But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe." A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe." Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe." Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

POST COMMUNION

Lord God our Father,
 through our Saviour Jesus Christ
 you have assured your children of eternal
 life

and in baptism have made us one with him:
 deliver us from the death of sin
 and raise us to new life in your love,
 in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,
 by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.



Something to hold on to

Caroline Hodgson *reflects on* Acts 2:14a. 22-32 and John 20:19-end

Today we read about Peter's Spirit-filled preaching of the Gospel message to the crowd in Jerusalem. A close reading reveals that he isn't telling people what they should believe or how they should live, so much as bearing witness to Christ's birth, life and death as the fulfilment of prophecy and the working out of God's saving promise to humankind. It's up to the individual listener to accept it or not, and many of them do. By verse 41, which is part of next Sunday's reading, we learn that, "Those who welcomed his message were baptised, and that day about three thousand persons were added". Peter's words, which referred to the prophecy they would have known and longed to see fulfilled, gave his listeners something tangible to hold on to, and they believed.

In John's Gospel we meet the resurrected Christ, who confronts Thomas' doubts head on. Do we imagine that Jesus was somehow ghost-like after his death and resurrection – a kind of hologram, perhaps? Yet Thomas is invited to "Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side." Even after death, Jesus is a physical presence among the disciples – the real, tangible working out of God's promise. He is the fulfilment of ancient prophecy and much more besides.

In accepting the message they heard from Peter and in being baptised those three thousand people became the physical body of Christ. And so it is today, here, over two thousand years later. Jesus is physically present among and within us, the body of Christ. Let's just allow the awesome reality of that to sink in. ☺



Resurrected Lord, ever present among us, teach me to accept the amazing responsibility of being your body, your hands, your feet on earth. Amen.

Stations of the resurrection

Station 13:
Thomas meets his Lord

by Richard Greatrex

The disciples' need for certainty is focused now on one man – Thomas. He probably wasn't the only one with doubts, nor the only one requiring concrete, physical proof. He was just the one out of the room when Jesus first appeared. So his doubt provides a second opportunity for them all to be convinced.

Scripture doesn't say whether Thomas actually puts his fingers in the scars, or his hand into the spear wound. Whatever occurs is enough to elicit Thomas' declaration: "My Lord and my God!" Whether he makes this response on behalf of the whole group or it is his own personal insight is not easy to tell. Certainly, the pool of believers who encounter the resurrected Jesus is growing – first Mary Magdalene, then John and Peter, now Thomas. Each has much more to fathom, for revelation is only a beginning; how you make it live and breathe in your own being is what counts. ☺



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Finding God on the smallholding

by Jeni Parsons

A year ago my ninety-two-year-old mum died. She lived with us and my dad on the smallholding in a wooden cabin. She loved animals and birds and took delight in holding whatever new creature had been hatched or born here. She herself was tiny and had little strength but she

had a fierceness in her love of the natural world that was inspiring.

She died in the middle of our lambing season, having rejoiced in the ones that were born. After she died there were more that she would never see but I know she would have loved them. She's buried in the chapelyard at the top of our lane, a woman of no religious allegiance, but now surrounded by the wild flowers and creatures she loved.

If God is present on the smallholding in all aspects then God has also embraced her in her fierce love of creation. ☺

“ There is no one who is insignificant in the purpose of God.
Alistair Begg (born 1952), US pastor