



*The Christian practice
of radical love
knows no bounds:
it does not stop at any border,
even the human one.*

—Sallie McFague

SECOND SUNDAY IN EASTER 19 APRIL 2020

Invitation to Prayer

Protect me, O God, for in you I find rest.
I say to you, “You are my God;
I know no goodness apart from you.
You show me the path of life.
In your presence there is fullness of joy;
in your right hand are pleasures forevermore.” (Psalm 16:1, 11, adapted)

Gathering Prayer

Holy Friend of spiders and ants,
of eucalypt and native flowers,
of singing things and things in hibernation,
of me—
I rise this day into your constancy,
your ever-present and sustaining grace.

Come to me, Spirit of Life,
fill me with your breath
that I might add my voice to creation’s praise
in this hopeful season of resurrection.
Amen.

Scripture Reading — John 20:19–23

You might read the passage using the practice of Lectio Divina. Here's a reminder of some of the movements in this practice:

1. **Read** — *Read the passage out loud, slowly, allowing the words to resonate and settle in your heart. After a pause, re-read the passage again. During these first two readings, listen for the word or phrase that catches your attention.*
 2. **Reflect** — *Take time to sit with your word or phrase. How does the word connect with your life right now? Enter the scene in your imagination. Carefully watch the people. Listen to how they interact. What do you hear and experience as you watch and listen?*
 3. **Pray** — *Talk to God about the word or phrase the Spirit has highlighted and what's coming up for you. Sometimes it is helpful to journal or draw. How has God addressed you in this Word and invited you to respond? Allow the scripture to lead you into a prayer response.*
 4. **Rest** — *Rest in God's presence and love.*
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When it was evening on that day, 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.

Going Deeper

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

Jesus breathes his Spirit onto the disciples and empowers them to continue his ministry in the world. This is the same ministry in which we participate today.

In John’s Gospel, the ministry of Jesus is one of making known God’s love for the world. Jesus revealed that God *is love*—full stop. This love would rather lay down its life than insight violence or harm against another. Enacting the ministry of Jesus is as simple, and as challenging as that.

“Sin” in this Gospel is not poor moral or ethical behaviour, but *unbelief*, an unwillingness or incapacity to see the love of God that is poured out in our midst daily.

In an essay from her book *Jesus Risen in our Midst*, Sandra Schneiders writes, “God is love expressed in the Gift who is Jesus. ...The ‘sin of the world’ is not to accept the Gift, *not to believe that God is love*. Humans refuse that gift, quite simply, when they refuse to love, when they choose other paths to ‘life’ and security, such as rivalry and violence.”

At first, Thomas refused to believe. He would not accept the testimony of the beloved community but insisted on relating to Jesus as he had before Jesus’ crucifixion—that is, in the flesh. In response to Thomas’ unbelief, Jesus revealed further the unconditional love of God. Jesus did not chide nor condemn but encouraged, “Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe.”



Image: The Incredulity of Thomas by Caravaggio

- God is love—full stop. Rest in this truth. Allow it to sink deeply into your heart.
- In the stillness of this time, contemplate and savour the ordinary gifts of grace that reaffirm and make it more possible for you to believe that *God is love*.
- In what ways are you being invited to continue the ministry of Jesus? How might you share God’s love with the world?

Reflections in Solitude

*You might read the reflection here and/or take time to meditate silently
or contemplate what has arisen in your encounter with scripture*

Prayers of Intercession

Source of All, open our eyes to the countless ways your love pours into our world each day. You hold nothing back, but give everything to restore and keep creation and our very lives. Newly aware of your love for us we say: Thank you.

Filled with your Breath of Peace, you enable us to be lovers in the world, continuing the ministry of Jesus in our time and place. May this be our work, our humble vocation—to be forgiving, reconciling, creating, growing, justice-seeking, peace-making, renewing, and loving as Christ loved us. Hear us now as we pray for the world, those we love and ourselves...

Disciples' Prayer

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours,
now and forever. Amen.

Blessing — A Celtic Blessing

May the blessings of light
be on you—
light without and light within.
May the blessed sunlight
shine on you
and warm your heart
till it glows
like a great peat fire.

The love of God, the grace of Jesus Christ and the communion of the Spirit be with us all.