



Today's Gospel, which we hear every year on this second Sunday or Eighth day of Easter, tells of a gathering behind locked doors, a kind of hidden gathering, a gathering out of fear, a gathering for a sense of safety—hiding. Today we know of so many people throughout the world who find themselves locked in due to hatred, war, violence, lies, murder, perpetrated upon them—they are hiding, longing for hope and waiting to be welcomed into a new home filled with truth. But there are others gathered today in ways designed to keep some people out and the same kind of people in! So much like the world we live in today, filled with fear, locking doors, longing to build walls and hoping to keep those perceived as different out.

What happens in these locked rooms, in these hiding places for safety in both the world and church? Jesus breaks through, offers peace, breathes into them the Spirit of reconciliation, compassion, mercy and blazing truth! Jesus sends them, and us, out of the locked room touched with a new and fearless courage. Sometimes those in the room are us! Jesus' word is "strong, loving, and wise:" No more hiding! Work for justice with words and deeds of mercy; do not ignore hateful words heard on Easter Sunday, words of destroying whole civilizations—one of the most significant in human history. Speak, resist,
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struggle for peace with deeds of hope and words of truth, open doors with compassionate and blazing hospitality—and listen, listen, listen. No more apathy to the great feast just celebrated and the faith chosen at the empty tomb. No more ignoring the many in need or the cries of those longing for a home; no more acceptance of hateful words threatening murder and destruction, no more exclusion, hatred, prejudice, or separation. No more staying at home. Fear no longer justifies inaction, silence or separation! Looking for a safe and convenient place is no longer acceptable or life-giving. No more separating the "children of God" into "them" and "us!" No more silence when hateful words of massive destruction are pronounced, actually spoken. and threatened on Easter Sunday. No one who claims to be Christian could ever, for any reason, utter such terrible words.

The words of Jesus to those locked in that upper room because they were afraid, echo through the universe, and our world, "Peace be with you!" These are words of vision, words the world needs to hear *and the only words that should be spoken on Easter Sunday*. Such a vision, and task is not easy, the challenge to speak can be heart-rending! So, doubt persists, reliance on fear, massive violence and separation is difficult to overcome. Yet we still believe that the Lord is risen and has broken through the walls we and others build, the doors we and others lock; the hateful violent words spoken, and the heavy stones used to block the entrance to life, reconciliation, and genuine justice. Blest with peace, we do have Christ's spirit. **WE HAVE HIS SPIRIT OF TRUTH, COMPASSION AND MERCY! WE CANNOT BE SILENT!**

Each year on this Sunday Thomas looks for evidence. He was not hiding behind locked doors. He was out in the city, among the many wounded, hurt, disappointed and filled with fear. He was among the people still wounded and still being crucified. Thomas chose to be seen, he would not hide, he named the sin, the darkness, the hate. In the midst of it all his faith was challenged, his spirit darkened. Is it Thomas looking at us, our

nation and the Church, during these days in which we all live? Looking at all who claim Christianity, at the many who pray, again and again for the world; gazing at us, who *“devote ourselves to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers.”* Thomas challenges us: *I will not believe until I see you challenging words and deeds of hate and destruction, without making excuse!* I will not believe, Thomas says, until voices of those filled with fear yet longing for hope, in every part of this weary world and nation, are finally heard. I will not believe until I see that the Gospel is taking root in the heart of those who claim to follow Christ, so much so that his words and compassion become the wellspring of hope for those who live in fear, risk annihilation, or exclusion. I will not believe until I see Christ’s promise of mercy extended to the many kept out. I will not believe until words of hate and destruction and annihilation are challenged, and those who speak such words are held to account. I will not believe, Thomas says, until I see you open the doors of welcome, until I see the diversity of the human family revered, respected and welcomed. I will believe, Thomas says to all who claim to be Christian, when I see you “unlocking the doors,” setting a larger table for the many longing to be nourished in hope and mercy. I will believe when I hear those who claim to follow Christ speaking words of peace, justice, kindness and truth, instead of hate, destruction, annihilation: and I will believe when I hear you condemn such terrible words and deeds. We can

answer Thomas, like Jesus did and does: Thomas, come here into this place where we are found again and again, faithful to the breaking of the bread and the sharing of the cup. —the wound of the sacrifice we make to gather; our shared wounds received in caring for others, and in our longing for justice; wounds of refusing to trust in violence, division or separation; wounds received when we refuse to embrace a vision of hate, wanton destruction and promises of death. Come here and see our wounds, the wounds of our own change of heart because of the Gospel we love and the Christ we serve; the wounds received when we speak a daring word of welcome to those too many others lock out or seek to send away. Come, Thomas, look and see, and do not persist in your unbelief!” Come here, Thomas, come to this place, and see how we are becoming a community of *“wounded healers,”* as we seek to see truth, challenge the lie, and work to live the Gospel. Look closely, Thomas, and touch the wounds of the struggling human family, put your hand into the fragile heart of every broken and threatened person and feel the warmth of healing love.

**STILL, THE STONE MUST BE ROLLED AWAY;
AGAIN, DOORS MUST BE UNLOCKED!
STILL TRUTH MUST BE SPOKEN AND WORDS OF HATE
AND ANNIHILATION, CHALLENGED AND NAMED.
THEN AWE WILL COME UPON EVERYONE
AND MANY WONDERS AND SIGNS WILL BE SEEN.
THE DIVINE MERCY GOD WILL BE FELT
AND WOUNDS WILL FINALLY BE HEALED!**

