

Resource Book

Mystagogy

Year A, B, C

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Second Sunday of Easter

Year C

Acts 5:12–16

Psalm 118:2–4, 13–15, 22–24

Revelation 1:9–11a, 12–13, 17–19

John 20:19–31

Feasting on God's Word

At the first appearance of Jesus to the assembled disciples, Thomas is absent. They relate to him their sense of joy and peace in knowing that the Crucified One is also the Risen One. The response of Thomas is curious. He does not deny the possibility of resurrection, he simply demands to believe on his own terms, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands and put my finger into the nailmarks and put my hand into his side, I will not believe." Like Mary Magdalene at the tomb, Thomas desires to touch the Risen One.

Surprisingly, eight days later, at the second appearance, Jesus offers to fulfill Thomas' conditions. The disciple responds with an affirmation of faith in the Crucified, Risen One. Conspicuous by its absence is the report of whether or not Thomas actually touched Jesus at this point.

Jesus tells Mary Magdalene to "stop holding on to me" (John 20:17). Thomas' only reported response to the same Risen Lord is his affirmation of faith (and probably not a touch). Where do believers touch the Crucified, Risen One?

His presence is touched in the very assembly of believers who gather in faith. The first gathering of the faithful took place in a locked room on the evening of that first day of the week. They were gathered again, eight days later. The faithful also gathered in Church at the celebration of the Easter Vigil. We also gather every Sunday, on the day of the resurrection. When the faithful gather as one body in faith, the Lord Jesus is touched.

When the newly baptized approach the eucharistic table for the first time at the Easter Vigil, they first exchange a ritual sign of peace. In that gesture of love, peace and unity is implored for every member of the Church and for the whole human family. In that child of God standing close by—to whom is extended a ritual sign—the beauty of the Risen Christ shines forth, radiating peace and joy. If we desire to touch Jesus who has risen, we must look to those gathered together to celebrate faith in him as they listen to the Word and partake of the eucharistic meal.

The signs and wonders reported in the Acts of the Apostles generate great excitement and an ever-expanding body of believers, the community of the faithful. The faith we have inherited from those first believers is a gift that we ourselves hand on to others. This handing on, nourished through the Eucharist, takes flesh in our daily witness as in word and deed we testify, "We have seen the Lord."

The proof of our Christian testimony lies in actions that radiate the peace and joy that can only come from faith. Others see us and know that we have been touched by the Crucified, Risen One and in the words of the psalmist, "give thanks to the Lord for he is good, his love is everlasting."

St. Augustine (d. 430) wrote of his journey of faith. After long, torturous years of searching for God, he finally found faith in the community of Christians: "Late have I loved you, O Beauty ever ancient, ever new, late have I loved you! You were within me, but I was outside, and it was there that I searched for you. In my unloveliness I plunged into the lovely things

which you created. You were with me but I was not with you. Created things kept me from you; yet if they had not been in you they would not have been at all. You called, you shouted, and you broke through my deafness. You flashed, you shone, and you dispelled my blindness. You breathed your fragrance on me; I drew in breath and now I pant for you. I have tasted you, now I hunger and thirst for more. You touched me, and I burned for your peace” (in Kathleen Hughes, Joseph A. Favazza, eds., *A Reconciliation Sourcebook*, Liturgy Training Publications, Archdiocese of Chicago, 1997, p. 58).

Savoring the Mysteries

1. Lead the participants in an exercise that helps them to recall a time in which they were the “doubting Thomas.” Invite them to share with one other person what was the experience and to name any insight that they gain from putting their experience in dialogue with this Gospel story.
2. Encourage them to ponder these questions and to share their responses: *When, where and how have you touched the Crucified, Risen One this past week? Every week at Mass, we extend a sign of peace to those around us. What does it mean to offer such a sign?*

3. Peace is the Risen Lord’s word to the disciples gathered in the upper room. *Describe the peace that the Lord is offering to them. In what way(s), does the Lord offer that peace to you? To your family? To the community? What are the obstacles to the peace that the Lord offers to us?*

Doing the Works of Charity

1. Ask them to consider some of the following activities and to choose one to implement in the coming week.
 - Call a family member or friend that they have not spoken to for sometime to renew the relationship.
 - Spend some time naming and reflecting on the source of peace in their lives and to choose an action that will deepen the peace.
 - Choose to become involved in a national or local organization that supports the peace movement.
 - Explore with the family ways that the home can become a more peaceful setting.
 - Each night have family members exchange a sign of peace before retiring.

