



# Bringing Home the Word

Second Sunday of Easter (Sunday of Divine Mercy) (A)

April 19, 2020

## Touching Jesus' Mercy

By Fr. Mark Haydu, LC

The memory of the marks of our sufferings can lead us to lose our peace. For Christ, this is not so. He shows the disciples his wounds and says, "Peace be with you." It may seem contradictory, but it isn't. To touch Christ's wounded side is to touch his mercy, to touch a love that overcomes everything. In spite of my sins wounding him, he comes to me in loving mercy. Jesus' wounds bring peace.

When the apostles see his hands and side, they rejoice. His wounds are a sign

that it is really him. No one else has those marks. His wounds are his identification! His wounds bring joy.

Thomas misses Jesus' first apparition, returning and demanding proof before he will believe. Rather than becoming angry, Jesus shows him his wounds. He invites Thomas to touch the signs of his suffering, and Thomas believes. Jesus' wounds bring faith.

We also need to insert our hands and hearts into Christ's side, to come into contact with his love and mercy. Only then can we be healed. Only then can we experience real peace, joy, and faith.

That's why Jesus breathes on his disciples and says, "Receive the holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them" (John 20:22-23). He wants to heal their wounds and see them produce joy and peace in others. God's grace is to reach all generations through the power of forgiveness he entrusts to his Church. The sacrament of penance is exactly that. We acknowledge our sins, and Jesus responds with understanding, forgiveness, and counsel. +

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### A Word from Pope Francis

To us also, on this Sunday, which St. John Paul II wished to dedicate to divine mercy, the Lord shows us, through the Gospel, his wounds. They are wounds of mercy....Jesus invites us to...enter into the mystery of these wounds, which is the mystery of his merciful love.

—Homily, April 12, 2015



## Sunday Readings

### Acts 2:42-47

Awe came upon everyone, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles.

### 1 Peter 1:3-9

You may have to suffer through various trials, so...the genuineness of your faith...may prove to be for praise, glory, and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

### John 20:19-31

These [signs] are written that you may [come to] believe that Jesus is the Messiah,...and that through this belief you may have life in his name.

### REFLECTION QUESTIONS

### QUESTIONS REFLECTION

- How often and how sincerely do you receive mercy through reconciliation?
- How often do you show and share the forgiveness and mercy you have been blessed with?

# Why Community? Why Church? Why Catholic?

By Jim and Susan Vogt



People have many reasons for being Catholic. Most are good, yet some seem weak: “Sunday morning without Mass would seem empty.” “I was raised Catholic. It’s all I know.” “I’m not sure there’s a God, but I’d rather err by believing than be surprised when I die.”

These aren’t *bad* reasons, but they may not stand up to the challenges of modern life. They’re like the house built on sand. When the storm came, it collapsed (see Matthew 7:24–27).

The storms are many: anger at the clergy sex-abuse scandals; dissatisfaction with the limited role of women; judging the Church as too wishy-washy, politically involved, rich, or concerned about rules; and hurt from negative personal experiences (for example, “The Church wouldn’t bury my father”).

Once a young adult leaves home, the practice of the faith may be seen as only a cultural commitment with no roots. Sometimes people aren’t welcomed when they approach the Church for marriage or other sacraments. Our Church must walk a delicate balance between staking out an identity that sometimes upholds unpopular values while welcoming all with unconditional love as Jesus did.

Lately we’ve been listening to folks who have left the Church and to others who have remained or returned to active

Catholicism. These are some of the more significant reasons we’ve heard about why people stay:

- **The communion of saints:** Many in the Church have been inspired by Catholics, some deceased but others still alive, who’ve been powerful witnesses of lives lived for others—true followers of Jesus.
- **Crisis:** Sometimes a life crisis drives us to ask the ultimate questions about life’s meaning. God often touches us during difficult times, and we come to understand that life is about more than collecting stuff or even surrounding ourselves with loving people.
- **The sacraments:** The Catholic Church has a rich tradition of combining the Word with actions and symbols in its seven sacraments. This reflects an understanding of how ordinary things—water, bread, oil, rings, words of forgiveness or commitment, and human touch—help us experience God’s love.
- **Universality:** People have told us that they were attracted to the Catholic Church because its heritage goes back to Jesus and there’s a unity of belief around the world.
- **Service and social justice:** The Catholic Church has perhaps the most extensive social service network

in the world—tending to the poor, coordinating aid during crises, and challenging everyone to live simply and help their neighbors because that is what Jesus taught.

- **Community:** Living a Christian life isn’t about being a “lone ranger.” Being in community with other believers, we can pool our resources and support each other.

In the end, the reason that we—Jim and Susan—are Catholic is that it’s where God has called us and spoken to us. There are many routes to God, but Catholicism is where we have experienced God’s touch. There may be Church policies with which we disagree, but we would find human foibles and failings no matter what religion we followed.

Some of the best and worst things in human history were done in the name of church, God, and religion. We must align ourselves with the best and repudiate the worst. The challenge is to be humble enough to remember that we’re not in charge and that we’re all imperfect sinners, still loved by God. As a community inspired by the life of Jesus, faith calls us to devote ourselves to the good of others.

Bottom line? Love. +

## PRAYER

*Risen Lord, you share with me  
God’s gifts of peace and  
forgiveness. Open my heart to  
share your peace and forgiveness  
with all people.*

—From *Hopeful Meditations for Every Day of  
Easter Through Pentecost*, Rev. Warren J. Savage  
and Mary Ann McSweeney

## WEEKDAY READINGS

April 20–25

**Monday**, Easter Weekday:  
Acts 4:23–31 / Jn 3:1–8

**Tuesday**, Easter Weekday:  
Acts 4:32–37 / Jn 3:7b–15

**Wednesday**, Easter Weekday:  
Acts 5:17–26 / Jn 3:16–21

**Thursday**, Easter Weekday:  
Acts 5:27–33 / Jn 3:31–36

**Friday**, Easter Weekday:  
Acts 5:34–42 / Jn 6:1–15

**Saturday**, St. Mark:  
1 Pt 5:5b–14 / Mk 16:15–20