



# Sunday Reflection

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Easter



in the Charges of St Margaret, Renfrew  
& St John, Johnstone

For Sunday 19 April 2020

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while all Church worship in the buildings is suspended

Hours after his resurrection, Christ stood among the disciples and gave them his peace. Today, Christ brings *us* that peace.

We consider our response.



### Reflection for this week's Gospel

**"Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.'" John 20.19**

#### **An Illustration to set the scene**

The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941 came as a huge, unexpected, shock. This hostile action on the part of

the Japanese came in the context of a tense relationship between the US and Japan, which had existed for many years. Japan was the subject of sanctions and in the months immediately preceding the attack both countries had been involved in unsuccessful talks. This was further complicated when the Japanese government fell. The new government requested the lifting of sanctions in return for an undertaking not to attack south east Asia. The US counter-proposal was that the Japanese should completely withdraw from China. The day before the proposal was delivered, Japan's task force set off for Pearl Harbor. The motivation was to distract the US from Japan's actions in south east Asia because Japan thought that the US Pacific fleet might intervene. The outcome was that the US became involved in the Second World War.

Despite the obvious build-up in tension, the attack itself came as a complete surprise.

### **Looking at the words of the Gospels**

The day we now know as Easter Sunday was a complete shock to Jesus' followers. Although he had been teaching them that he would die and rise again, it really hadn't sunk in. Who can blame them? It's hard to imagine being able to engage with such teaching. The events in today's Gospel take place in the evening. So far, John tells us, Jesus has appeared only to Mary Magdalene and she has told the disciples that she has seen him, but we are not told what they made of her story. Jesus appears to the disciples unexpectedly, in the locked room where they are hiding, and says, "Peace be with you"; he follows it up with a commission: "As the Father has sent me, so I send you."

It is hard to imagine how the disciples must have felt. First someone manages to get into the room although the door is locked. Then they recognise that person as Jesus, who they are quite sure is dead, except for a story told by Mary Magdalene

earlier. He shows them his hands and side to prove it really is him, and they barely have time to accept it before he is sending them out to teach others. But in between he gives them his peace for a second time.

If they had imagined this scenario, the disciples might have expected Jesus to begin by saying something like "It's me. Don't worry or panic. I told you I would rise from the dead, and here I am. Are you all okay?" Perhaps he might have allowed them to ask some questions. But it doesn't happen like that at all. His peace is sufficient – he moves straight on to telling them what to do next, and it is a big ask.

### **How can we reflect on the application to our lives**

Perhaps the Americans should have seen Pearl Harbor coming. There had been plenty of build-up. But war came out of the blue. In the same way, the peace of Christ came out of the blue for the disciples. But peace, as is often said, is not just the absence of war. Instead, it is something active. It is not like comfortable relaxation in a spa or putting your feet up with a book all day. In peacetime countries can work to improve the collective life of their citizens. The economy can be improved, cultural life can flourish, better social services can give security to the vulnerable.

If we have really engaged emotionally with the events of this Holy Week, we will, again, have felt the surprise of Easter Day, and the surprise of Christ's Easter peace. This, more than any other kind of peace, requires us to do something. Christ sends us, as the Father sent him, whatever that may mean in practice for each one of us today. As Pearl Harbor set off a train of events for Americans in 1941, so the shock of Christ's peace is the beginning of something for us. We must not simply sit back and reflect on the amazing story. Instead, we must go out in the power of the Holy Spirit. During this time of our isolation our 'going out' is one of staying in touch, making connections with folk, with groups and organizations and initiating that which

brings the renewed peace of Easter to the lives of those we encounter – we offer shocking words of peace in this time of heightened anxiety.

**“Jesus came and stood among them and said, ‘Peace be with you.’”** John 20.19



Please share your response to this reflection to [Rector@SECStJohnStMargaret.org.uk](mailto:Rector@SECStJohnStMargaret.org.uk) – did anything speak to you? Did you feel challenged, angered, consoled by something in the words? How did God’ spirit move you as you read it? Have you shared the words with someone else? Is this a worthwhile thing to make available to folk whilst we cannot meet for corporate worship to share in word and sacrament? What are your thoughts?

**[www.SECStJohnStMargaret.org.uk](http://www.SECStJohnStMargaret.org.uk)**