



# Sunday Reflection

## Ordinary Time

in the Charges of St Margarets, Renfrew  
& St Johns, Johnstone



For Sunday 24 April 2022

# Easter 2

*When the risen Jesus breathed on his disciples they received the Holy Spirit. As we meet to worship in his name, let us open ourselves to accept his Spirit, breathed into every particle of our being.*

## Reflection for this week's Gospel teaching

**"He breathed on them and said to them,  
'Receive the Holy Spirit'". John 20:22**

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

According to a survey conducted in America and the UK, the majority of adult *millennials* – *people aged between twenty and forty* – suffer from FoMO, resulting in an escalating use of social media and the need to say yes to everything.

FoMO is the "Fear of Missing Out", also described as "the pervasive apprehension that others might be having rewarding experiences from which one is absent".

It perpetuates the fear that we have made the wrong decision on how to spend our time.

## Looking at the teaching of the Gospel

Perhaps Thomas was the very first millennial to suffer from FoMO.

He was absent when the risen Jesus appeared to the disciples on the evening of the first Easter Day, so did not receive the Holy Spirit breathed into him by Jesus.

No wonder he comes across as stubbornly sceptical.

For the full description of the effects of the Holy Spirit upon the disciples we have to wait for Luke's version of the *Day of Pentecost*, recorded in Acts, but in today's reading John tells us they were filled with joy.

The fact that they were transformed from a terrified group, meeting in secret behind locked doors, to a band of excited, happy, animated people, cannot have been lost on Thomas.

Perhaps because he was aware how much he had missed, and perhaps because he was a realist, knowing that dead bodies do not come back to life, Thomas refused to believe, but he did leave the door open.

He declared that he would not believe simply on the words of his friends, but indicated that if he were presented with positive proof by meeting Jesus for himself, then he too would accept that Jesus really was alive.

The week that followed may have been the longest week of Thomas' life, but a week later, when the apostles were gathered together, Jesus appeared to them again.

This time the doors were shut but apparently not locked, so after meeting with the risen Lord it would seem that the disciples were already less fearful.

The implication is that this appearance of Jesus was solely for Thomas' benefit.

After greeting them all, Jesus addressed Thomas using the very words and imagery that Thomas had used in his declaration to the disciples.

Jesus invited Thomas to touch him, to feel his wounds. Perhaps the week with the disciples had already begun to convince Thomas, for he did not need to touch Jesus.

As soon as he saw Jesus, he believed.

Strangely, this seems to be the only post-resurrection appearance of Jesus where his wounds are still apparent.

In these two accounts in John's Gospel Jesus is known immediately, but in all the other appearances, Jesus is recognised only when he does something appropriate to the occasion.

For Mary Magdalene it is the way he speaks her name.

For the two walking to Emmaus, it is the way he breaks bread, and for others it is the way he cooks a meal on the beach.

There is another anomaly, too.

When Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene he refuses to allow her to touch him, saying that he has not yet ascended to the Father.

Yet a week later he invites Thomas to touch him, even though he still has not ascended.

Perhaps the answer has something to do with the nature of the touch. Mary Magdalene does not want to let Jesus go and is desperate to cling to him, whereas Thomas merely wants to confirm that the risen Jesus is the same person as the Jesus who died on the cross.

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

When they meet with the risen Jesus, the disciples' fear, gloom and despondency lifts and meeting with the risen Lord still changes lives today.

Jesus tailors his post-resurrection appearances to meet the needs of those who experience him, and we can be sure that he knows our needs.

He will still meet us where we need him and in a way that we can access, because he will appear according to our needs.

Some of us, like Thomas, may need to learn patience and to open our minds to accept the apparently impossible.

But if we are able to receive the risen Lord, we will miss out on nothing but be filled with joy.

**“He breathed on them and said to them,  
'Receive the Holy Spirit'”. *John 20:22***

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's 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 some folk are not able to meet for corporate worship to share in word and sacrament? What are your thoughts?

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