

**Parish of the Assumption of Our Lady
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**BULLETIN C 22 – 24TH APRIL 2022
SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER – DIVINE MERCY SUNDAY**

My dear brothers and sisters,

How wonderful Holy Week and Easter was this year, I personally found it very uplifting and it was good to see record numbers in attendance. The church looked so beautiful. So many worked hard to achieve this, by cleaning, flower arranging, gardening, altar serving and the choir really excelled themselves. Thank you all very much indeed. Thank you also for your generosity to me in the Easter Offering.

One person who deserves a very special mention is Deacon Michael. He does much of the organization and encourages helpers. Deacon Michael has decided he needs to have a sabbatical break from ministry and this is something that we must respect. He has served this parish extremely well for the past 11 years as a deacon. I particularly will miss his help and support which he has given me in my ministry since arriving here. We must all now allow him time to rest, to think and to pray. Please do not burden him with parish matters, but refer them for the time being to me, do pray for him that the Holy Spirit will guide him.

God bless you all,
Fr. John

Cash collections this Holy Week were:-

Maundy Thursday – For the poor = £79-21
Good Friday – For the Holy Places = £118-70
Easter Sunday – For the Parish Priest = £542-42

Social Committee meets in the Hall on Wednesday at 7.00pm

TIMES OF MASSES THIS WEEK

Sun	24	2 nd of Easter	1000	Sung Mass	Irene Wall (RIP)
			1200	Mass	Peace in Ukraine
			1800	Mass	People of the Parish
Tue	26	St George	1000	Mass	our nation
Wed	27	feria of Eastertime	1000	Mass	
Thu	28	feria of Eastertime	1000	Mass	Lucy O’Keeffe (INT)
Sun	1	3 rd of Easter	1000	Sung Mass	People of the Parish
			1200	Mass	
			1800	Mass	Deacon Michael Smith

GOSPEL REFLECTION

Detective series are very popular on television at the moment. We, the viewers, often have the advantage of knowing exactly what has happened and we then watch the less informed police trying to work out who committed the crime. Sometimes, when confronted with reports of what a witness has said, the officer in charge will exclaim in exasperation something along the lines of “That’s only hearsay. It’s not evidence.” Witnesses have to have been present and have reliable information about what they have observed. It is not enough to mention what someone else has told them, even if that turns out, in the end, to be accurate.

That, in a nutshell, is what the resurrection appearance stories in the Gospel are all about. Hearsay is not enough. Elsewhere, the Gospels tell us that the male apostles at first did not believe the testimony of the women who visited the tomb of Jesus and reported that he was risen. But today’s story makes the point that to be a true witness *to*, not *of*, the resurrection, the person has to have had a personal experience of the risen Jesus.

In John’s Gospel account, there are no apostles. An apostle means “one who is sent”. In John’s version of the Jesus story, Jesus is the sole actor: his followers do not share in his ministry. For example, in the story of the feeding of the crowd, it is Jesus who distributes the bread. Jesus does not send out others to preach and heal. There are no apostles, only disciples. It is this group who are locked away, fearful that what happened to Jesus might happen to them as his followers. The risen Jesus makes himself present among them and bestows on them peace, which removes the fear of the Jewish authorities that has locked them away. To overcome any remaining doubt, Jesus shows them his wounds from the crucifixion. Fear turns to joy and Jesus sends them as the Father sent him. It is at this point that disciples become apostles. Jesus then breathes the Holy Spirit on them: those who receive their message and confirm this publicly by being baptised will have their sins forgiven; those who do not will remain as they were.

The second scene occurs a week later when Thomas, the sceptic, is present. There is an important point here that, in the Gospel tradition, no one comes to believe in the risen Jesus purely on the word of other people. The official witnesses to the resurrection all have to experience the risen Lord for themselves. Hearsay is not enough. Thomas represents all those who have heard about the resurrection but are not yet sure. It is this questioning, this desire to know for himself, which brings him to his personal encounter with Jesus and leads to his making the ultimate declaration about who Jesus really is: “My Lord and my God!”

The last words Jesus utters in today’s Gospel story are, “Happy [or Blessed] are those who have not seen and yet believe.” This is known as the “Johannine Beatitude” and applies to all of us today. Thomas the sceptic stands for all those who want to know more, who are reluctant simply to take other people’s word in matters of faith. It is Thomas’ personal integrity and search that bring him to a personal experience of the risen Jesus. This should encourage all those who want to know more, who are not satisfied with easy answers, to keep on asking questions, because, very often, the questions are more important than the answers.

This episode is sometimes called “Little Pentecost”. There is no dramatic manifestation of the Holy Spirit; Jesus simply breathes on the disciples and sends them out. We are Jesus’ disciples today and are called, not just to continue Jesus’ mission of bringing knowledge of God’s love for human beings to others, but also to continue Jesus’ presence in our world, in our local community. This does not have to be anything dramatic or even explicit. The people mentioned in the reading from Acts recognised that the first disciples of Jesus had something special and they wanted part of it, so they came for blessing and healing. Perhaps if we live, quietly, more as disciples of Jesus, those around us might notice that we have something special and be attracted. In this way we could fulfil our calling to be missionary disciples, listening to what the Spirit is telling us in our daily lives.