

Proclamation of the Gospel

The Lord be with you.
And with your Spirit.

A reading from the holy Gospel according to St. John.
Glory to You, O Lord.

On the evening of that first day of the week, when the doors were locked, where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, "Peace be with you." When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. The disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them "Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained."

Thomas, called Didymus, one of the Twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples said to him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands and put my finger into the nail marks and put my hand into his side, I will not believe."

Now a week later his disciples were again inside and Thomas was with them. Jesus came, although the doors were locked, and stood in their midst and said, "Peace be with you." Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and see my hands, and bring your hand and put it into my side, and do not be unbelieving, but believe." Thomas answered and said to him, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus said to him, "Have you come to believe because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed."

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples that are not written in this book. But these are written that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that through this belief you may have life in His name.

The Gospel of the Lord.
Praise to You, Lord Jesus Christ.

Homily by Fr. Gerry Hurley

Wow! A whole lot of action in the Gospel, huh? And the rest of you? Yes? Absolutely! Look at those events. And a great summation of St. John. Not all the things that He did are written in this book because if they were, he says in another place, all the books in the world wouldn't contain it. But they are told, these things are told, for what reason — that we might believe. That He is the Christ, the son of God, and that He did it all for us. What an interesting appearance. Can you imagine being present there at that event? And that you're gathered, and you're down and out because you're dealing with the death. The disciples were still dealing with the death, they are worried about the Jews, they were worried about the Romans, they were worried sick, and wondering what's our next move? What are we going to do? Gonna go back to fishing again? Is He gonna give us a sign? And then — right there — locked doors no problem. It's a great little piece of the story. Whatever locked doors you have, if you invite Him He can slide right through. He can be right there. We tend to have a lot of those locked doors. But the first thing is not, Hey boys how are you all doing? First thing? Peace be with you. How important is that! It is so important He repeats it again after giving them the initial introduction why I'm here.

Hey, I'm here to give you life, to re-instill, to reinvigorate you. You were lost in the death. It's easy to get lost in the death. When those we love die, we can so easily fall into a kind of a funk. We just stress and worry about them. There is no length of time, it doesn't have to be a month, or six weeks, or six months, or a year that you get through it. It's just a kind of a funk that comes over, right? Have you had that? Sure, some of you have.

Hey, when my friend died on July 4th. Yeah, it was a funk, Fr. Noonan. You just see everything through the fact that he is dead. We talked every day. He is dead. It takes a long time to get beyond it. Thomas in the Gospel was really a classic kind of example for many of us. He probably went into a great funk. So much so that he separated himself from the group. He is away and he is just trying to figure what in the world am I going to do? You know that feeling visits a lot of people. What am I going to do now, because our hopes were vested in this. That is the reality of our lives. Our hopes are vested in this reality - what are we gonna do now? The death of this. It might be my partner, might be my parent, might be a family member — may be young or old —but the power of its affect and impact in our lives is really significant. Poor old Thomas, away from the group. Thomas meets up with them. They're traveling along the way somewhere, and the boys say, hey let me tell you, we've see Him! Yeah, but I'm not gonna believe ya'll anyway, you know? They might've even taunted him saying, Nah, nah, nah, we've seen Him and you haven't! Whatever way they approached it. But, they put it on him, we've seen the Lord. He said, Hey I'm not gonna believe until I get what I need out of this. I'm slow to believe. That could be any of us. I'm not gonna believe until I put my finger into the wounds, put my hand, or experience, and see for myself.

It's Ok! Jesus was quite comfortable with it. A week later, they are there and Thomas is with them. Wow, does he get a real surprise! Jesus — Peace be with you, He said again. That was pretty important. In fact, it's awfully important. How much the peace of Christ is absent in our world! Just try to get your head around that! The peace which the world cannot give. It's a peace that comes, not as a result of beating up the other, destroying the enemy, kicking them around, or being destructive, or anything else. It's a peace that comes from Christ Jesus. Not from conquering or annihilating or wiping out or killing the enemy, even. Actually, it's a peace that comes from growing in peace with the enemy, whoever the enemy, whatever the enemy. Because the enemy is within, not without. In the language and in the experience of Christ Jesus, the enemy is within. Not out there. But, we love to have it out there because, then I don't have to focus on the real stuff and the real work.

So, here's what we're gonna do. Over the next seven weeks, we are going to focus on that reality. If you don't like that reality, then you might want to go to one of the neighboring churches. I just want to put you on alert. Because some people say, Oh no! Seven weeks! We're not very good at adapting for seven weeks. But, I want to put you on notice. For seven weeks, here is what we are going to focus on. I heard it back in 1984 for the first time. I quoted it four weeks before Lent. It's a great quotation. I was in Kansas City, St. Joe, at a Youth Conference, and I heard the line. It says, "The Church, often described as a hospital, contains too many patients who failed to get well. The Church, often described as the school, contains too many pupils who fail to learn. Is this the church's witness to the world? Sick and ignorant disciples who know not the Christ whom they claim as Lord." It really struck me. I've come back to it again and again. And, then in Lent this year I went and looked it up to see if I can find the book again, because my original copy "Holy Island" by James Kennedy is a Methodist minister, great, great teacher. Great individual. And he wrote this little book in 1957. He went off to Lindisfarne, one of the northern islands off the coast of Britain, and lived there on the island throughout the Lenten season, and he wrote a daily reflection every day. A big part of his experience of being a teacher and preacher and a leader. On the first week, on the Wednesday, of the fifth week of Lent, this is what he wrote: "The Church often described as a hospital."

It wasn't just for the Methodist Church, or the Catholic Church, or the Episcopal Church. It's for the Church of Jesus Christ in the world. The image of the Church being a hospital. Do we have too many patients who fail to

get well? Certainly an important question. Why do we not do well? Do we take the medicine? Do we take the direction? So, for seven weeks we're gonna really be reflective of this reality. I'm inviting you to write me, and we will use it on the front of the bulletin. And I look at all of the people here who can write about that. How many of you work in the medical field in some way? Yes. You have quite an interesting view and perspective. Those of you that work in the educational experience? Wow, you have quite a perspective, as well. Too many students who fail to learn. Why? Why do we fail? What is the antidote? What is it? What do we need to be doing?

The Gospel leads us into a perspective, you know. When we suffer, when we have difficulty, we tend to pull away from community, we tend to isolate. It's so easy to do. The big trauma of emotion, the death of a loved one, it's so easy to just pull away. No, don't touch it, it's too difficult. Even physical wounds — uh uh! Don't touch it! We've been taught that from the outset. Uh uh! We cover them, and we hope that they'll heal behind these bandages. Are we doing it the right way? Maybe that is why too many people fail to get well because we tend much more to hide the wounds. We tend to hide the sickness, the sadness, the struggle. It's so easy to do. And here comes Jesus landing in the midst of the disciples. He appears the first time, shows them the wounds. Wow, that's a move away from our original theory, and our original practice. How can the healing happen if we don't allow others to see, to know, to touch, to care for us, and to care for our wounds? How can the healing happen? Are we doing it the right way? How does the Church as hospital become instrumental in the reality in our lives, and helping us deal with the emotional, the physical, the spiritual wounds? It's pretty important. Over these weeks, we will reflect together.

A priest was traveling to Latin America. On the plane, the woman seated next to him, she was going to Peru. They struck up a conversation, and she said, "I'm taking my mother home. She was here in the United States. She had three surgeries for cancer." The priest said to her, "And how is she doing right now?" She said, "She's completely cured. In fact, when get to Peru our whole family is going to be there gathered to welcome her." And then the woman said to him, "And what about you? Why are you going south?" And he said, "I'm a priest." He's said, "I'm going down to do missionary work there." And immediately, her countenance and her person changed. She had this look of awe on her face and she reached over and grabbed his arm. She said, "Father," she said. "My mother has cancer and there's no hope for her. We're bring her home to die." And he said, why in the world did she hid this to begin with? Not just her, but we all tend to hide. Why did the woman feel she had to keep up the pretense that all was well with my soul? Why did she have to hide the mortal, physical wounds of her mother? Why did she have to hide her own emotional wounds? Why do we do that?

The Church often described as a hospital contains too many patients who fail to get well. Could that be? Her own wounds were caused by love. They were nothing to be ashamed off, and yet we still seem to carry a kind of a banner of shame about sharing or processing. It was only when she discovered that the man next to her was a priest that she was able to speak openly about the reality, perhaps in hope of getting some sense of empathy or understanding or appreciation for this huge emotional crisis. What would be like bringing your mother home on a flight? And your family there to greet them? And, hey sometimes the whole family denies the reality, we don't tell her. Why do we do that? What is our hope?

Here we will look at poor old Thomas in the Gospel. Man, what a great chap! Hey, I'm not gonna believe until I can put my finger in there, until I see the wounds for myself. That's what it's going to take for me. And Jesus loved him in that, and loved him through it. Next week when He comes back, He said, Hey — Peace! Now, I want you to have this peace. But Thomas, you're not gonna have it until you come up and do what you need to do. Put your finger in here. Put your hand in here. Don't be in unbelief.

So as we reflect throughout these weeks maybe we can reflect this week on our own wounds. What are the wounds that I hold back from Him? What are the wounds that I hold back from others? What are the wounds

that I hold back, period? And, how can the Church as a hospital help me in my woundedness? The probability is, it never will. And we will have too many patients who fail to get well so long as we don't speak, so long as we hide, so long as we don't bring to the fore. The first thing He did after the appearance was to show them the wounds. They are the marks of love. They are the marks of Grace. They are the marks of affection. Certainly nothing to be ashamed of.

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