

This Sunday is traditionally called Low Sunday, and certainly many may be feeling the addition of 3 more weeks of lock down to be very depressing. Our gospel today speaks of the disciples being behind locked doors and being afraid. The traumatic events of Good Friday when Jesus breathed his last on the Cross have been overtaken by the news that Jesus is risen and we heard last week from Michael of Mary's emotional encounter with Jesus in the garden and her witness to the disciples.

Here in John Jesus appears on the evening of that same day. He comes to give his disciples his Peace and assure them that he is alive. Shalom was the traditional Hebrew welcome and it shows that despite their behaviour toward him over the previous few days, Jesus has forgiven them. He reminds them that they too are to offer forgiveness to everyone once they had been released from their lock down.

John mentions the locked door perhaps to underline that the Risen Christ is no longer limited by physical barriers. John wants us to know that this is not some ghost. Jesus' hands and side are clearly visible, as if proof were needed. But Jesus goes further, he had promised that he would send the helper and so here Jesus breathes on them, a foretaste of what was to come at Pentecost. We often need to let God breathe new life into us so that our faith will grow in times of uncertainty.

For some reason Thomas wasn't there that day. Thomas has to wait a week for his encounter with Jesus. Jesus wants this encounter to strengthen all future believers who like us were not there at the time and won't have seen the Risen Christ. Thomas had had previous difficulties in understanding some of Jesus' teaching and now he hesitates when confronted with the resurrection. Thomas wants to see the proof for himself. But when Jesus enters again through closed doors his doubts give way to an amazing statement of Faith "My Lord and My God".

In a few moments Michael is going to ask us to renew our own baptismal vows: rejecting, renouncing, and repenting of all that separate us from God and our neighbours, reminding us that we too have had the Holy Spirit breathed into us and

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we too can walk in the footsteps of Jesus called to share our faith and be living signs of his love so as John says “all may have life in his name”. Amen. [416]