

2018 – Year B – 2nd Sunday of Easter

Who do you trust? That was the name of a game show from some years ago. However, some English major pointed out that the name should be changed to the correct usage and be “Whom do you trust?” Either way we are living in times where just about everything is called into question. I am not sure when this began but it seems to have increased in recent years.

Some things that have been questioned have been around for several years: does the government have a secret base in Nevada where aliens and UFOs are being kept, who really shot President John Kennedy, and did astronauts really land on the moon? Some things have only been the subject of recent questioning: is global warming really happening, did Germany really kill millions of Jewish people during World War II, and very recently, did the Russians really meddle in the 2016 Presidential election?

There was a time when it seemed possible to trust what you read in the newspaper or heard on television. Now it seems that everyone has either an opinion or a version of the truth that they want everyone else to believe. The age of the internet has seemed to have made the situation more complicated. The variety of social media platforms have made the number of viewpoints expand at an ever increasing rate. We are even hearing words like “fake news” and “alternative facts.” Who are we to trust and what are we to believe?

After Jesus’ Resurrection and Ascension there were also competing narratives about what really had happened. The Jewish authorities spread information that Jesus’ followers had stolen the body of a dead Jesus and that was the explanation for the empty tomb. Jesus’ disciples were

telling people that Jesus had really been raised from the dead by God and now lived a new glorious life with God in heaven. Again we are confronted with whom, and which narrative, to believe.

Our Gospel gives us part of the answer of whom and what to believe. Jesus appears to his disciples on the third day after his death and burial. Earlier the disciples had heard that the tomb where Jesus was laid was empty, and they did not know what to believe. Now they are in the presence of the Resurrected Jesus.

God knows what human nature is. He knew that people would need more than just an empty tomb to believe that Jesus had really been raised from the dead. He also knew that he had to leave with them a symbol of the mercy that he extends to all people. When Jesus appears to his disciples in Jerusalem it was the proof that he really had risen to a new and glorious life, and was not just a resuscitated body. Jesus disciples were able to see and talk with the risen Jesus. Jesus also goes beyond just appearing to his disciples, he gives them a special gift and a new power.

John reports that Jesus breathed on the disciples and gave them the gift of the Holy Spirit. The word that John uses for "breath" is the same that was used in the Book of Genesis when God breathed into Adam and gave him the gift of life. The gift of the Holy Spirit gave the disciples new life, the life of God's spirit within them. After receiving the Holy Spirit Jesus entrusts to his disciples the power to forgive sins that people commit. Just as God, in his mercy, allowed Jesus to take upon himself the sins of the world through his cross, death and resurrection, the

disciples have now received the power to heal the relationship that people have with God by the forgiveness of sins committed after Baptism. God's mercy is enduring.

We are also reminded of the old saying that "seeing is believing" through Jesus' interaction with Thomas. We have been educated throughout our lives to look for the facts of a situation and then make a decision as to what is true. The words that Thomas speaks about the appearance of Jesus ring true in our ears; and they echo the situation that we are living through in the present. Whom and what are we to believe? Thomas believes because he sees. The disciples, the witnesses of Jesus, give their testimony of the truth of the Resurrection.

In our Baptism we received the same gift of the Holy Spirit that Jesus breathed on his disciples. The Holy Spirit acts within us to guide us to what is true. The truth is that God loves us unconditionally and wants us to have lives full of happiness, even though we sometimes struggle with trials and difficulties. The Holy Spirit is always present within us and is a reminder that God's mercy is always available to those who seek him in love. When we truly believe this we can say, in confidence, my Lord and my God.