

Lord Jesus, open the Scriptures to us; make our hearts burn while you speak to us.

“Peace be with you”

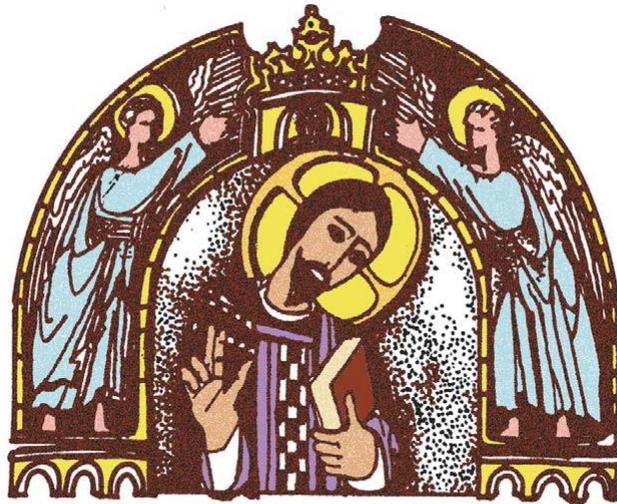
On Easter Sunday evening the apostles were gathered in the upper room with the doors locked. The room was haunted by absence, and was full of bitter-sweet memories. It was here the Master had washed their feet and celebrated the Last Supper with them. But it was here too that they had sworn loyalty which didn't see the night through.

The apostles were wounded individually, by fear, doubt, guilt, grief, and despair. But they were also wounded collectively because their unity was broken: two of their numbers were absent, one was dead (Judas), the other (Thomas) was going through a crisis of faith. Like all people in pain, they had erected a barrier around themselves.

Jesus didn't wait for them to come to Him. He came to them, while they were still fearful and guilt-ridden (because of their cowardice and betrayal). In one bold move He broke through their barrier, and stood among them. He didn't blame them or even scold them for failing Him. There was no blame, no recrimination. He knew how they were feeling, and He didn't rub salt into their wounds. Instead, He gave them something they desperately needed. He said to them, “Peace be with you.” He said it not once but twice, to make sure it sank in. In receiving His peace, they received His forgiveness.

Suddenly the greatness and wonder of it struck them: death had been overcome. Good had triumphed, love and life had triumphed. The humble Jesus had triumphed over all the evil forces that had been arrayed against Him.

A fresh start was possible. As a result they were filled with joy.



*Everything written
about me
must be fulfilled*

Jesus' approach was so gentle. There was no harshness in Him. The humble Jesus, who triumphed over death, gave courage to His crushed apostles, healed their wounds, renewed their hope, gave them life, and empowered them. From utter collapse and failure, something totally and utterly new arose. The result was that they not only believed in Him, but also in themselves. What a joy to be fully known and fully loved at the same time.

Easter doesn't take away our pain or remove our fears. But it does introduce a new element into our lives. It gives a meaning to our pain. It lights it up with hope. All is different because Jesus is alive and speaks his words of peace to us as He spoke them to the apostles. When we fail under trial and temptation we can draw encouragement from the story of Jesus' own disciples, all of whom failed Him during the passion.

One theme occurs in all three readings: forgiveness is available to those who repent and believe in Jesus as their Saviour. This has great relevance for us. A lot of ugly crimes are committed today, not all of which can be put down to ignorance. But if there is forgiveness for those who killed Jesus, then surely there is forgiveness for those that do these things. The task of preachers of the word is to assure people that God's forgiveness is available to them, thus enabling them to make a fresh start.

