

## Sunday 15th April 2012 Evening Service, Jack McHugh – John 20:19-31



It's the evening of the first day of the week and we find the disciples hiding away in the upper room for fear of the Jews . They have heard reports from Mary Magdalene and other followers that Jesus is alive but they remain uncertain about what they should be doing next. Suddenly Jesus appears before them and they are filled with joy.

Jesus immediately displays his true nature as the only perfect human by bestowing his peace upon them. Were he less than perfect he might have looked upon the disciples with typically human feelings of reproach, anger, vengefulness. After all, these are the men who deserted him and, in Peter's case, even denied knowing him! But this wholly human and wholly divine Saviour has come to dissolve the fear that has been paralysing them and to equip them for their mission. The disciples' lives are now going to change completely. Genuine and sustainable change is something we as human being always find difficult. For the disciples to be set free from their fears and to be courageous enough to go forth into the world with the Good News requires something revolutionary to happen. Jesus therefore breathes new life into them – he gives them the Holy Spirit to empower them and strengthen them for their task. Through the Spirit they are able to discover their true identity as the children of God; they are equipped for their mission.

There is an important lesson here for us. As humans we are prey to fear and fear can make us forget God. But Jesus does not forget us and he offers us his Spirit to empower us. No matter what fears burden us in our lives – fears about health, relationships, money, work – if we accept the help of the Holy Spirit those fears will no longer dominate our lives.

One disciple is absent when this encounter with the risen Lord takes place. Thomas listens to his fellows' description of events but remains sceptical. He states *"Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe."*

When Jesus reappears a week later Thomas, who is now present, is awed and humbled. He recognises and submits to the truth in a few heartfelt words *"My Lord and my God!"*

The light of the Gospel cannot be extinguished by waves of doubt or man's scepticism. Just as this Good News emerged from the darkness of that first Holy Week so it continues to meet us today even in our darkest hour. In this Eastertide, as we walk with Jesus Christ through his Passion , share his death and rejoice in his Resurrection and victory over sin and death, we are renewed. Like those first disciples we too are equipped to be the agents of change in our world.