

## Reflection for the Second Sunday of Easter

*“On the evening of the first day of the week”,* the day of the resurrection, *“the doors [were] locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews.”* It had been an incredible day! Mary Magdalene had discovered the empty tomb early in the morning and sought out Simon Peter and *“the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved.”* Together they had gone to the tomb and saw how it was empty except *“for the linen cloths, lying there, and the face cloth, which had been on Jesus’ head.”* The disciple Jesus loved immediately *“saw and believed”* but Mary Magdalene and Simon Peter appear hesitant and doubtful. Mary Magdalene remains at the tomb as the other two depart and took her turn to look into the tomb. *“She saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had lain”* but does not come to believe that Jesus is risen. Even when Jesus himself appears she *“supposes him to be the gardener”* and enquires whether he has taken the body away. Not until Jesus speaks her name does she recognise him. And now, late into the evening, the disciples are hiding away in a locked room *“for fear of the Jews.”* It is fair to say that even after this incredible day, the resurrection has not filled them with an overwhelming joy or courage or the slightest missionary zeal.

As a result of today’s gospel story, history singles out *“Thomas, called the Twin”* as the one who doubted but a closer look at the narratives indicate that he wasn’t the only one. Simon Peter too is slow to come to faith in the risen Jesus and to embrace the changes this will make to his life. There is another chapter to St John’s gospel which records that after these appearances in Jerusalem the apostles go back north to the Sea of Galilee. The same Thomas of today’s gospel, the one called the Twin, Simon Peter himself, Nathaniel of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee and two others of his disciples decide to go back to their old life as fishermen until Jesus appears and calls them back to the new life he plans for them as fishers of men. The narrative labours the point that *“this was now the third time that Jesus was revealed to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.”* The first two appearances seem to have had little effect! It took the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost to transform the lives of these reluctant witnesses of the resurrection and fill them with missionary zeal.

The day of resurrection contrasts greatly with the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came upon the apostles and Peter and the others filled Jerusalem with their teaching. On that day, as a result of the conviction they had now arrived at, three thousand people embraced the gospel and were baptized. These are the people of today’s first reading who *“devoted themselves to the Apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.”* They embrace a new, radical way of life *“staying together and [holding] all things in common”*. They sold *“their possessions and belongings and distributed the proceeds to all, as any had need.”* And day by day they grew in number.

St John in his gospel records the doubts of Thomas, the hesitancy of Simon Peter and Mary Magdalene so that we might take heart from them on our own journeys of faith.