**Solidarity with Sisters’ Communal Prayer**

**April 16–Sunday of Divine Mercy**

*“Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed.”*

Please have bread and drink for the communion rite.

**HELLOs** and then Betty mutes everyone. **(Betty Thompson)**

**WELCOME (Cecilia Estrada)**

Welcome, everyone!

* Mary and I prepared our prayer for today.
* Introduction – is there anyone who hasn’t been here before?
* Thanks to the people who will be reading and leading us in prayer today: Sister Vera Ruotolo, Bill Cavanaugh, Kathy Cavanaugh, Peg Duchesne, Donna Ellerman, and Sister Jacqueline Quinn. We are always looking for new readers and grateful for your help. If you are available on April 23, contact Teri Butel and for April 30, contact Suzie De Quattro or Betty Thompson. You can leave a message in Chat or email the planners.

**SETTLING IN (Cecilia Estrada)**

Let’s quiet ourselves so we can be attentive to what God hopes for us today. Notice

your breath as it goes in and out…. Let it slow and deepen… and slowly fill you with the

Peace of Christ. We begin with 3 deep breaths. One to be here… one to be together…

and one to welcome in the Spirit who never leaves us.

Now let us enter into our prayer together by singing along with the song, “Alleluia! He is Risen.”

**OPENING SONG** **-**   **(Betty Thompson)**

# Alleluia! He Is Risen – Bob Hurd and Ken Canedo

[https://youtu.be/2zo4b2\_xGos](https://youtu.be/2zo4b2_xGos%20)  (play at 1.25 speed)

**CALL TO WORSHIP/ GATHERING PRAYER (Kathy Cavanaugh)**

Let us rejoice, for Jesus Christ is risen! Alleluia! Alleluia!

All: Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia! Alleluia!

We come together today to stand beside the disciples as we deepen our experience of the Risen One alive within us. It is the light of the Risen One that lets us see our next step. And so, we pray:

Holy One, over and over during this season we hear Jesus say, “Peace be with you.”

Teach us how to be a community of contagious peace and hope.

In a world among loved ones with heart-breaking needs, show us how to be your heart.

May we inquire, nudge, and challenge each other to imagine what none of us could conceive alone.

Blessed Be!

Sister Vera Ruotolo will introduce us to today’s theme.

**INTRODUCTION TO THEME (Sister Vera Ruotolo)**

After the resurrection, Jesus returns to visit the disciples who are afraid that they will be persecuted because they are followers of Jesus. When Jesus enters the room, he offers them peace by sharing the gift of the Holy Spirit. However, Thomas is missing from the scene. He finds himself needing the same opportunity to encounter the risen Christ that the other disciples had.

*“*The Apostle Thomas’ case is important to us for at least three reasons: first, because it comforts us in our insecurity; second, because it shows us that every doubt can lead to an outcome brighter than any uncertainty; and, lastly, because the words Jesus addressed to him remind us of the true meaning of mature faith and encourage us to persevere, despite the difficulty along our journey with him.”

*(Slight pause)*

Now Peg Duchesne will read from the Gospel of John, chapter 20, verses 19 to 31.

Then Bill Cavanaugh will offer questions that will lead us into silence.

**READING 1**  **(Peg Duchesne)**

In the evening of that same day, the first day of the week, the doors were locked in the room where the disciples were, for fear of the Temple authorities.

Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.”

Having said this, the Savior showed them the marks of crucifixion.

The disciples were filled with joy when they saw Jesus, who said to them again, “Peace be with you. As Abba God sent me, so I send you.”

After saying this, Jesus breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone’s sins, they are forgiven. If you retain anyone’s sins, they are retained.”

It happened that one of the Twelve, Thomas-Didymus, was absent when Jesus came. The other disciples kept telling him, “We’ve seen Jesus!”

Thomas’ answer was, “I’ll never believe it without putting my finger in the nail marks and my hand into the spear wound.”

On the eighth day, the disciples were once more in the room, and this time Thomas was with them. Despite the locked doors, Jesus came and stood before them, saying, “Peace be with you.”

Then, to Thomas, Jesus said, “Take your finger and examine my hands. Put your hand into my side. Don’t persist in your unbelief, but believe!”

Thomas said in response, “My Savior and my God!”

Jesus then said, “You have become a believer because you saw me. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”

Jesus performed many other signs as well -- signs not recorded here -- in the presence of the disciples. But these have been recorded to help you believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Only-Begotten, so that by believing you may have life in Jesus’ Name.

**QUESTIONS 1 (Bill Cavanaugh)**

What doubts or closed doors limit your ability to show compassion to others?

How does the Holy Spirit guide you in forgiving and retaining sin?

**COMMUNAL SILENCE** **(Betty:** Share slide 1, time 2:00, chime, stop slide.**)**

**Cecilia Estrada:** Now, Mary Dolmage will read a poem titled, “Stand In Faith” by Evangelist - Johnnye V. Chandler.

**READING 2 (Mary Dolmage)**

A picture containing text, old, vintage

Description automatically generatedStand in faith  
Even when you can’t see your way  
Stand in faith  
Even when you feel like you can’t face another day  
Stand in faith  
Even when the tears want to flow from your eyes  
Stand in faith  
Knowing that our God will always provide  
Stand in faith  
Even when you feel that all hope is gone  
Stand in faith  
Knowing that Jesus is always there for you to lean on   
Stand in faith  
Even when you feel like giving up

Stand in faith   
Because the Holy Spirit is there ... saying, "Just look up"   
Stand in faith  
Even in those times you feel so all alone  
Stand in faith  
Hold on and be strong, for Yahweh is still on the throne  
Stand in faith  
Even when it’s hard to believe  
Stand in faith  
Knowing that God can change your situation, suddenly  
Stand in faith  
Even in those times you feel it’s hard to pray  
Stand in faith  
And believe that Jesus has already made the way  
Faith is the substance of things hoped for,

the evidence of things not seen

So, stand in faith  
Because you already have the victory!

*(Slight pause)*

**QUESTIONS 2 (Bill Cavanaugh)**

How does the presence of the Holy Spirit help you to have faith?

Recall a time when you stood in faith even though you were fearful.

**COMMUNAL SILENCE (Betty:** Share slide 2, time 2:00, chime, stop slide.**)**

**Cecilia Estrada**: Now Sister Jacqueline Quinn will read an excerpt from “**Catholic Women Preach for the Second Sunday of Easter,”** by Jenny DEVIVO, PH.D.

**READING 3 (Sister Jacqueline Quinn)**

On the evening of Easter Sunday, the text tells us that Jesus appeared to the other disciples and showed them his hands and his side.  When the others tell Thomas that they have seen the Lord, Thomas says he needs to see the mark of the nails in Jesus’ his hands and put his finger in Jesus’ side.

Notice that when Mary Magdalene tells the other disciples, “I have seen the Teacher,” the text doesn’t tell us anything about her mentioning Jesus’ wounds.  Later that evening, the disciples have locked themselves in a room in fear, and Jesus appears to them.  They see Jesus for themselves and see his wounds, but they tell Thomas, “We have seen Jesus.” Again, there is no mention that they told Thomas of Jesus’ wounds.

Perhaps that is what is missing.  Perhaps that is what is necessary for faith.  The resurrection of Easter has not erased the cross of Good Friday.  Perhaps beyond the glorious announcement of “I have seen the Teacher,” Thomas needed to know that the horrors of Good Friday were real.

I have grown to have faith in the resurrection through the witness of others, of those who profess the resurrection but do not deny the reality of Good Friday.  I need the whole of the paschal mystery.

We go through so many challenges in life and sometimes think we are going to be crushed beyond any hope.  No one is exempt from these painful experiences.  Once we have gone through a few of them, we might be able to remember God’s faithfulness and sustenance in our past. But when something new happens that is beyond what we have already experienced, it may become difficult to hold onto our faith in the resurrection. That is when we need the witness of one another, people who have walked through the valley of the shadow of death and who can say, “I have seen the Teacher.  He is risen.”

In this Easter season, we rejoice not only because Jesus is risen from the dead, but because in the marks visible in his hands and side, we know Jesus has walked the way of suffering and death ahead of us and is risen.  And with Thomas we proclaim, “My Savior and my God.”

*(Slight pause)*

**QUESTIONS 3 (Bill Cavanaugh)**

Recall an experience that initially crushed you completely – and ultimately strengthened your faith.

What happens inside you when you hear the witness of someone else? How does your response vary depending on the person, situation, or message?

How do you hold the horror of Good Friday with the glory of Easter?

**COMMUNAL SILENCE** **(Betty:** Share slide 3, time 2:00, chime, stop slide.**)**

Cecilia Estrada: Donna Ellerman will lead our sharing.

**SHARING (Donna Ellerman)**

We invite you to share the essence of what emerged in **your** heart this morning as you have reflected upon our reading and music. We welcome everyone who wants to speak, and we also know that the wisdom of this community includes both words shared and silent listening.

So let’s begin in silence as we gather our reflections. *[pause]*

Now who would like to start our sharing?

[People share personal reflections.]

[If there is extended silence during the sharing:] Is there anyone else who would like to share?  *[Pause for a slow, deep breath.]*

*[Stop by 11:20 EDT, 8:20 PDT.]*

Thank you.  Let us pause for a minute of silence to hold on to all that has been said. *[Long pause.]* We can continue after the final song, as we often do.

Holding onto what the Holy One is saying, we turn to God in prayer.

**PRAYERS OF THE COMMUNITY (Sister Vera Ruotolo)**

Let’s pause to notice the prayers that arise in us now.

Our response will be: **Risen One, grant us your loving mercy and peace.**

(Pause)

Faithful One, help us to believe in you through doubtful times. Help us to know that your love and peace will see us through our journey.

**For this we pray: Risen One, grant us your loving mercy and peace.**

Holy Compassion, may all answer the call to promote prayer, nonviolence, and dialogue for peaceful conflict resolution. May we carry your compassion to all who live in fear for what the future may bring.

**For this we pray: Risen One, grant us your loving mercy and peace.**

Holy Creator, as we celebrate Earth Day, we thank you for the beauty of all that is around us. Help us to pay attention to how all of our choices affect our common home.

**For this we pray: Risen One, grant us your loving mercy and peace.**

God among us, strengthen and inspire women religious, especially the Leadership Conference of Women Religious. Recreate them for your purpose in this place and in this time. Build solidarity among all your people to make your gospel a reality.

**For this we pray: Risen One, grant us your loving mercy and peace.**

For what else shall we pray? Please end your petition with “For this we pray… your response.”

(*People share prayers. Respond to each:*) **Risen One, grant us your loving mercy and grace.**

O You who love us more than we can imagine, we are grateful for this chance to give you our prayers, spoken and unspoken. We entrust the outcome to you. Blessed Be!

**OFFERTORY (Cecilia Estrada)**

In this Easter season, we celebrate the amazing gift of Christ among us. Identifying as a

disciple of Jesus Christ is not simply a matter of whether or not we believe.

Rather, it is about what we do with our belief. What will you do this week with your

belief in Christ among us? [Pause.]

Generous God, Creative Spirit, we commit to sharing our time, talents, and treasures so

that we may be a light and a witness to the transforming love of Jesus Christ. Blessed Be.

**CELEBRATION OF COMMUNION (Cecilia Estrada)**

Today for our communion prayer we pray with the song “Remembrance.”

[<https://youtu.be/9oCNwIA6xLc>](https://youtu.be/9oCNwIA6xLc)  (Begin at the :45 mark. End at 4:20.

Play at 1.25 speed.)

**SHARING BREAD (Mary Dolmage)**

Holding the bread and drink let us pray together, as we extend our hands outward and bless these gifts in thanksgiving for life. Open our eyes to see the hunger of others. Thank you for giving us food for the journey.

We are one bread. We are one body.

Let us now eat and drink, that we may be for the world the body of Christ, redeemed by God’s love.

(Pause to allow people to eat and drink.)

Let us say: Blessed Be! So be it!

To extend our communion, Peg Duchesne will lead us in the prayer of Jesus.

**THE PRAYER OF JESUS (Peg Duchesne)**

***All (muted):***

Now let us join our hearts in the words of the Polynesian and Maori people and the New Zealand Anglican community:

Eternal Spirit,  
Earth-maker, Pain-bearer, Life-giver,  
Source of all that is and that shall be,  
Father and Mother of us all,  
Loving God, in whom is heaven:

The hallowing of your name echo through the universe;  
The way of your justice be followed by the peoples of the world;  
Your heavenly will be done by all created beings;  
Your commonwealth of peace and freedom  
sustain our hope and come on earth.

With the bread we need for today, feed us.  
In the hurts we absorb from one another, forgive us.  
In times of temptation and test, strengthen us.  
From trial too great to endure, spare us.  
From the grip of all that is evil, free us.  
For you reign in the glory of the power that is love,  
now and forever. Blessed Be!

**FINAL BLESSING (Kathy and Bill Cavanaugh)**

We raise our hands to witness to each other in our final blessing for today.

May we be blessed to know the healing power of God’s presence.

Alleluia! Alleluia!

May Jesus give us unshakable faith to believe, and know He meets our every need. Alleluia! Alleluia!

May we receive the blessing of shalom from our Risen God.

Alleluia! Alleluia!

May we have peace and harmony of spirit, body, and soul in our lives.

Alleluia! Alleluia!

May we be blessed with God’s unshakable peace from the inside out.

Alleluia! Alleluia!

May we be blessed with the benefits of God’s covenant of peace in harmony with ourselves, with God, and with others.

Alleluia! Alleluia!

Blessed Be!

Cecilia Estrada: Now, we conclude our prayer as we sing “Resucitó” / “He Is Risen”

**CLOSING SONG –** Resucitó **(Betty Thompson)**

<https://youtu.be/gLlQQig5gio>

(Play at 1.25 speed.)