

Sermon at the Cathedral Eucharist

Second Sunday of Easter

readings: [Acts 2.14a, 22-32](#), [1 Peter 1.3-9](#), [John 20.19-end](#)

16 April 2023

I'm going to start this sermon with the words of Dietrich Bonhoeffer:

“We must be ready to allow ourselves to be interrupted by God.” We may have a plan but we must be always aware of how God is interrupting us and showing us a better way...”

If you get nothing else from this sermon take that away. Be ready to be interrupted by God, he is showing you a better way!

Why am I starting with this? Because I had a plan for this sermon and it got interrupted. I was going to tell you about weakness and power but then God decided what we needed today was to go back to basics. To be reminded that God invites us to trust him, that he will guide us along the right path.

That we needed to be reminded that, as St Ignatius said:

- our purpose in life is to live with God,
- that he gives us life because he loves us and
- that it is our own response of love that allows God's life to flow into us without limit.
- Apparently, we need reminding that all things in the world are gifts from God, created for us that we might know him better, love him even more deeply and serve him even more fully.
- That we should use these gifts wisely, so that they don't become an impediment between us and God. That means not fixing our desires, for instance, on health or sickness, wealth or poverty, success or failure, a long life or a short one. For everything has the potential of calling forth in us an even deeper response to our life in God.

Our only desire and our one choice should be this:

I want and I choose what better leads to God deepening his life in me.

What has this to do with the readings we have just heard? you may be asking... Well, I could have chosen to talk about Thomas' doubts but I think you have already heard that sermon, once or twice...

Let me take you back to the story... you know how it goes: Thomas makes a demand of God and God fulfils it. But then, and here comes the interesting part, Jesus turns his attention away from Thomas and towards us...

In our sickness, in our weakness, in our sometimes unbelief... Jesus turns to us and calls us blessed: “Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe” (John 20:29). This blessing is echoed in 1 Peter: “Although you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy...” (1 Peter 1:8-9).

Maybe you have never given much thought about the blessing of believing without seeing... but if St Ignatius was right... In some mysterious way... God gives us life because he loves us and... without fully understanding or seeing we believe that he does (indeed love us) and if we are open to his love, then that allows God's life to flow into us without limit!

The power of believing without seeing is opening us to have God's life poured into us without limit... blessing indeed! Jesus called it living life to the full.

But maybe our response isn't so enthusiastic. Maybe like Thomas we are burdened down, afraid and grieving, demanding the impossible in a vain hope of regaining some control over our lives... Then it is important to remember that when Jesus appeared to Thomas what he demanded originally, and what seemed so essential to him – to put his fingers in the wounds of Jesus - no longer mattered, he no longer needed to do it – he simply opened himself to believe and answered him: “My Lord and my God!”

Thomas demands to see the Lord's wounds because he feels broken and weak. His friend is dead, the life he thought he was preparing for is gone and all that is left is fear and grief and anger. Demanding something he thought was impossible was a way of regaining some control over all that loss. Wanting control when our world falls apart is the natural, instinctive thing to do. And sometimes the things we want control over don't even make sense, particularly to others who may not be experiencing our grief or pain or loss. However, perceived control didn't bring him peace. What he was unable to do was turn his pain into a response of love to God, he needed God to do that for him.

We need God, because God is life, our life. The revelation here, for me at least, is that we even need God to help us love him. We are so imprisoned by our own desires, our successes and failures, our pain and our responsibilities that we end up demanding things of God that just entangle us further, often failing to see how God is providing for us... interrupting us constantly, with new tasks, with boring errands, difficult people, as well as loving ones... interrupting us that he may be guiding us along a better path.

Like Thomas we need only one thing:

I want and I choose what better leads to God deepening his life in me. So that I may respond, my Lord and my God.

May the Lord continue to interrupt and guide you today and always and may you be awoken to those interruptions.

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