

Monsignor Dennis Sheehan
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Second Sunday of Easter – Liturgical Year C

Every single day, God is at work making silk purses out of sows' ears. If resurrection stories tell us about what it means for Jesus to be alive again, they tell us more about what happens to people who meet him. If Jesus is somewhat the same, he's also very different. Much the same can be said for those who meet the risen Jesus. They are much the same, yet very much changed. Today's Gospel is a case in point. Let's look at it to see how Jesus is changed. More importantly, let's examine the good news to see how the disciples are changed. Maybe they are a clue how God is at work today in the Risen Jesus, making silk purses out of sows' ears.

The Gospel begins with the evening of the first Easter. John is careful to note the fear, confusion, and sense of failure that invades their gathering. Their beloved Jesus has been executed as a criminal. Maybe they are next. So they hide in a locked room, probably listening with dread-filled hearts for the tramp of the soldier's foot on the stair. Judas, now gone, had arranged his capture. When the going got rough, they panicked and ran. The blustering Peter even denied he knew Jesus. They are washouts, filled with remorse, fear, and failure.

Suddenly, here is Jesus. He startles them to the marrow of their bones. But note carefully what happens. No condemnation, no scolding, no rebuke. "Peace be with you." He dissolves their fear; he heals their grief. He forgives their failure. "Peace be with you."

He does not ignore the past. He makes peace with the past. And what a peace it is. Listen to his next words. "As the Father has sent me, so I send you." As the disciples have known Christ's forgiveness and peace, they are to share it. Theirs is nothing less than to give the peace they receive. They are to find hearts once trapped like theirs in failure and grief. They are to be Christ who forgives for others.

Jesus who comes to them is much the same, yet very different. So with these clustered disciples. In many ways, they are the same; yet, in important ways, they are very different.

The story has a sequel. When the absent Thomas returns, his wide-eyed colleagues can hardly wait to tell him what happened. But Thomas is moved neither by their testimony nor by the change he saw in them. Jesus comes to them again. Again, his greeting: "Peace be with you". This time he turns to Thomas. Again, no rebuke. Instead, he offers Thomas what he had asked. See now how Thomas changes. From refusal to bold confession of faith. From doubt to belief. This is resurrection. The Scripture today recalls a host of people like Thomas – they meet the Lord. They remain themselves yet they are very different.

For us? Are we so different from those first disciples? Are we at times hiding behind closed doors or fear or guilt? Today's good news is that when we meet the risen Jesus this Easter we can ourselves be changed. There are parts of ourselves that shame us. There are parts of ourselves that we seem unable to control. There are parts of us we don't want to live with. It's to those parts of our lives that today's good news can speak. Jesus is here present in our gathering just as truly as he was in that upper room. "Blessed still more he says of us that are those who do not see and yet believe." To us he offers peace; to us he offers the possibility of change; to us he offers hope of renewal.

We too – at Eucharist, in prayer, in the sacrament of reconciliation, in our relationships with each other – we too are raised up by the resurrection of Jesus. He speaks peace to us. He breathes the Spirit of forgiveness and peace on us. He sends us to share that forgiveness with those who wait for it. God indeed is at work today still making silk purses out of sows' ears – even you and me.