

JESUS ENTERS (JOHN 20. 19-31)

In today's gospel we heard a few words that echo our own present situation - 'fear' and 'locked'. These days we are 'locked' because of the 'fear' of the virus. In the gospel, we find that the disciples were also locked during the second Sunday of Easter. They locked themselves inside a room because of the fear of the Jews – they feared that the Jews who crucified Jesus would kill them also.

Their situation was worse than ours today. We can stay inside our rooms without fear – because we know that if we stay inside, the virus will not search for us, catch us – and infect us. But the disciples were fearful even inside that room – because they feared that the Jews will search - and kill them if they are found - even though they are locked in.

This is the context in which Jesus enters their room. Jesus did not knock at the door - they did not have to open the door even. But Jesus came inside and stood, right at the middle.

It's is fascinating to see that Jesus knew where his disciples were – though the Jews did not know; and Jesus was able to freely travel even that extremely dangerous and tensed situation. He knew where his presence is most needed – so without seeking permission of his disciples he enters into that locked room.

These days when we cannot go anywhere freely – and our usual comfort zones are closed - when we are not able to go and meet the people whom we usually meet for a conversation or over a meal to discuss the issues we face – what more assurance we need as God's people!

Jesus can reach you – anywhere at any time. There is no place where you are – and no territory of your personhood is - unfamiliar or unreachable to Jesus. Jesus can penetrate into any space – and to any depth of your being through the complex layers of your life.

There are several things that we fear about right now. There are many things that we cannot control right now – some of us are really sad that we are not able to experience the joy of fellowship in the church – some of us are worried about our health and are puzzled whether or not to even seek medical help for some ongoing issues (whether going out will expose us to greater difficulty).

Parents are worried about their children...the impact of this pandemic in their formation. The fear of each of us could be different... but Jesus knows them all.

Among these fears – inside our closed rooms – Jesus enters. And in today's gospel we find Jesus giving three things to those who are dear to him.

Firstly Jesus says, 'peace be to you'. Jesus knows that before making his disciples do anything or in order to make them do anything - what they need first is peace. That is the missing component in our lives too that either does not allow us to vision a future - or make us behave or act differently at times. So peace is the first gift that Jesus offers them. That peace of Christ is grounded in his power of resurrection. That is the only power that could move us forward beyond these dark days – and vision a future beyond. Jesus offered it freely... without request... knowing the situation of his disciples. And that enabled them to have a renewed commitment and hope. Though the experience of cross made them doubt on God's power - and hide themselves - they were able to experience the joy of peace because they knew Jesus – because of the relationship they had with Jesus.

In the gospel we find Jesus saying it for a second time 'peace be with you' – and calming their troubled minds. And then he breathes of them 'the spirit of God'... and reveals God's plan for their lives 'As the Father has sent me, so I send you'.

And the disciples continued the ministry that Jesus had entrusted them. From mission perspective we can say so many things here which are not relevant for this specific context.

So, let us ask ourselves what Jesus wants us to do during these days with the peace and power that are given. I am sure God wants us to stay well, so take good care of yourselves – and take care of the many things that you can do – and leave the rest to God who is in control of the situation. It's a time when loneliness can overpower you if you are living alone - so call your friends – talk as much you can with others. Sing the hymn 'What a friend we have in Jesus' – remember the wonderful times you had – and think of meeting your friends again – it is not very far. And if you are with your loved ones – this is a time when the love is enhanced – or tensions increase. So take control of your mind. For each one of us – the situation is different. So get control of the situation. Have peace – have hope – and have the power of the 'Spirit' to vision the future. May God bless you, Amen.