

Second Sunday of Easter

Year B

Acts 4:32-35

Ps 118:2-4, 13-15, 22-24

I Jn 5:1-6

Jn 20:19-31

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According to recent studies by the United Nations and World Bank, the distribution of the world's goods looks like a champagne glass. The wide brim filled with the delicious sparkling drink represents 83% of the world's resources. This is held by the 20% of the economically better off people in the world. The bottom of the thin stem of the glass, where little liquid penetrates represents 1% of the world's resources and this is held by the poorest 20% of the world's population. The image is a staggering reminder of a division of the world's good between the haves and the have-nots.

The causes for this division are historical, cultural, economic and political and are not what we are here to analyze. What we are called to do as followers of the Risen Lord is to look at that reality and ask what the Word of God calls us to. The readings of today certainly present a great challenge.

In the first reading from the Acts of the Apostles we hear about what characterizes a follower of Christ in the earliest Christian community. The emphasis here is that all goods were held in common. This spirit of sharing resulted in no one suffering needs. There could be no champagne glass among these Christians. This attitude of sharing becomes a distinguishing mark of the first Christians, something that calls them not only to stand out, but to attract members in spite of suffering and persecution. They have one mind and one heart, a favorite Augustinian expression, precisely because they decide to share their goods. Four centuries later, St. Augustine would use this same text as a basis of his monastic community. Sharing of goods became the one essential condition for achieving a community of one heart and one mind.

The second reading from St. John calls on us to see that one heart and one mind is part of a global call. All of us are "born of God" and if you love the Father you love all those born of Him. It is a call to embrace the universality of our common brother and sisterhood as a result of the love we embrace in God. It is because of the universality of our relationship to God that we are called to look on the poorest as our brothers and sisters and to share our resources to close that gap which makes our champagne glass a sign of scandal.

Sharing our resources is not easy. We have much as a nation and as individuals, but we never believe that we have enough. Our every desire often converts into a need, and so we come to believe that we cannot share much. Thus foreign aid and development assistance occupy small spaces on our national budgets. To share, when we think that we might not have enough for ourselves is one of the great challenges we face as a nation, a parish, a family and as individuals.

This brings us to the gospel. We all recognize the doubting Thomas. He cannot make a leap of faith into a logic that he doesn't understand. Jesus died. End of the story. It made no sense to talk of him being alive since that wouldn't match the laws of death. So Thomas will not believe, he will not make the leap to join the others into thinking in a new way. It takes the Risen Lord to come, to challenge and to open his eyes.

The gospel tells us that Thomas' name means "twin." Who's his twin? Could it be us? Are we the ones who doubt that sharing is possible? Are we the ones that doubt that the champagne glass can be broken? Are we the one's that would feel insecure if we shared more than what we thought we, or our nation, could afford?

The Risen Lord comes to break us from our fears. To challenge us to rise up with him and to fulfill God's dream, not our own.