

'Spiritual Communion' in the weeks after Easter

*You may wish to find a space for prayer in front of a cross, a candle, or a special place. The words in **bold** you are encouraged to say out loud as worship and prayer.*

Opening Prayer

The Church of which we are members is not defined by the walls of a building but by the Body of Christ of which we are members.

We are joining with Christians everywhere to be nourished by the one who tells us, 'I am the Bread of Life'.

Opening Sentences Reminding us of our Easter Joy

Alleluia. Christ is risen. **He is risen indeed. Alleluia, Alleluia, alleluia.**

I am the first and the last, says the Lord, and the living one;
I was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore.

Jesus Christ is risen from the dead. **Alleluia.**
He has defeated the powers of death. **Alleluia.**
He turns our sorrow into dancing. **Alleluia.**



Prayers of Preparation and Confession

Almighty God to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hidden: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy name; through Christ our Lord. Amen

Reflect on the week and on your relationships.

- What good things have come from God this week?
- Where have I fallen short?
- What might I do tomorrow?

You may wish to pray

Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.



A reading from the Gospel

Read John 20:19-31 (A reflection attached to the end of the service sheet)

Intercessions

Let us pray for the needs of the world, for our local community, and for those close to you.

End with the Lord's Prayer. **Our Father...**

Let us give thanks for the saving death and resurrection of Jesus
and ask him to be with us now and in the week ahead.

Thanks be to you, Lord Jesus Christ, for all the benefits you have given me,
for all the pains and insults you have borne for me.

Since I cannot now receive you sacramentally in the bread and wine,
I ask you to come spiritually into my heart.

**O most merciful redeemer, friend and brother,
may I know you more clearly,
love you more dearly,
and follow you more nearly, day by day. Amen.**

Here are words you may trust.

Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead:

He is our salvation, **our eternal glory.**

If we die with Him, **we shall live with Him;**

If we endure with Him, **we shall reign with Him.**

For he has broken the power of death;

and brought life and immortality through the gospel. (2 Timothy 2.11-13)

Blessing and Peace

May the Lord bless us, and preserve us from all evil, and keep us in eternal life. **Amen.**

The Peace of the Lord be always with you



Reflection on John 20:19-31

It is Easter. Our hearts and minds have been stirred with the possibility of life after death. Jesus has been proclaimed Lord even over death itself ... and we share this moment with Thomas the doubter. This is the wonderful invitation of scripture ... to share our moments. To share them with all those we meet in the Bible. In fact, we must as Christians come to understand that we share moments with all those we meet in our lives, in our communities, in our families. Our moments are always shared. Even now locked-down, in isolation, we share this moment. This moment of Easter hope and Easter doubt shared with Thomas. Shared across time and place.

My favourite songwriter is an American musician called Rich Mullins (he is worth a listen in these times of slowness and space .. not so much for his music but for his lyrics it is fair to say). I have shared lots of my moments with him. Shared wonder and anxiety and concerns which are met with the loving words of Jesus to believe.

I mention Rich as I was struck by something I read in an article he wrote about what shared moments offer us. He refers to the quote often attributed to John Donne which says 'no-one is an island'. And Rich asks 'if we are not islands, why do we feel so alone? If we are "part of the main," why are we so often in a condition of isolation? Why is it that in spite of - or sometimes, more tragically, because of - our most gut-wrenching efforts to experience a sense of belonging and to participate in the sharing of camaraderie or friendship or love, we experience a deep, disturbing alienation? There is a sense of aloneness that permeates our existence.'

It seems a somewhat bleak reflection. But Rich goes on to remind us that ironically this sense of 'being alone' is one of the most significant things we share with one another. This truth has really made a difference to me many times since reflecting on it. When you feel most alone and most 'out on a limb' remember .. there are lots of other people who have felt like this lots of times. In other words ... we are in this together! We share our sense of isolation with each other.

Thomas must have felt very alone on that first day of the Easter week. Everyone else around him seemed to believe. No-one else with whom he was locked-down with in the house seemed to doubt. But Thomas was not alone was he. In fact he might be one of the most relatable characters in all of history. If he had been able to look beyond the walls of that house and the circumstances of that moment in time and space, Thomas would have seen in the context of human history he stands alongside all of us in his doubts and anxiety. We are all together with him each time we read this story in the week after Easter.

In these strange times of disturbing alienation let us embrace Thomas' story once again. Let us hear what Jesus has to say to us in this moment .. to all of us together. Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." Then he said to Thomas, ' Do not doubt but believe.'. Then Jesus said to him, "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe."