

ALLELUIA, THE LORD IS RISEN!

Newbec

NEW WAY OF BEING CHURCH

EASTER SUNDAY

B E D I S C I P L E S O F H O P E

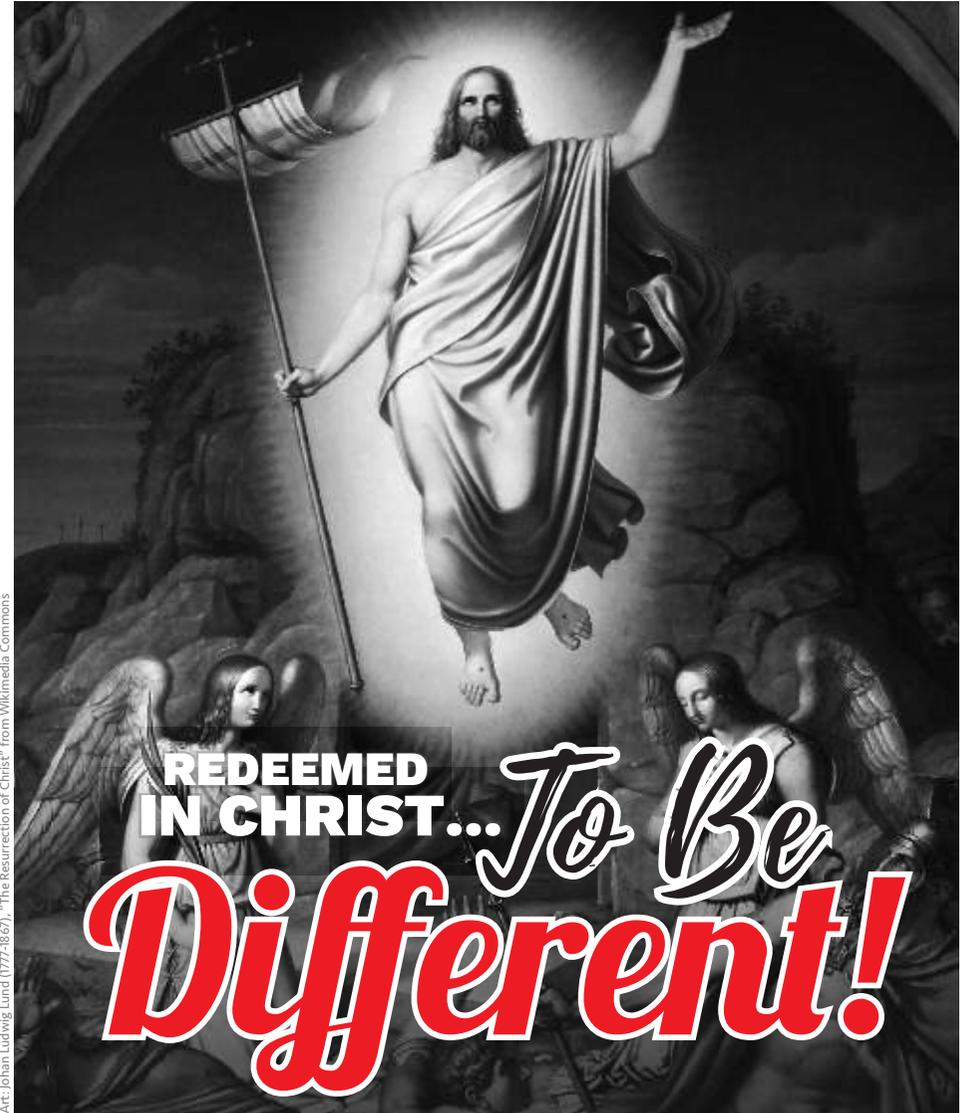
In bringing about the redemption through suffering, Christ has also raised human suffering to the level of the redemption. Thus, each man, in suffering, can also become a sharer in the redemption suffering of Christ.

- St. John Paul II

This week we see Peter as being portrayed with an exuberant confidence. He stands before the crowd to proclaim that the disciples (and he) had been with Jesus - and that they had witnessed Jesus' actions first-hand. He also recounts how Jesus was put to death, and that God has raised him from the dead. And now, the disciples of Jesus are following his command to preach his message. Our first Pope is boldly at work!

Contrast this with the earlier Gospel passages, we see a different Peter. When Mary Magdalene informs them that the Body of Jesus had been removed from the tomb, Peter rushes there with John. Upon reaching the entrance, John hesitates, but Peter, in his usual innocent brashness, enters the tomb. He looks around, sees the linen wrappings and the cloth that was on Jesus' head. John follows him in, and on seeing the same things, believed. However, "as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead." It seemed that for Peter, there was nothing to be excited about. So he did not see the urgency to go and share with the rest of the disciples what they had discovered. So picture this, John and Peter then meekly returned home!

We are shown two different sides of Peter. Peter who entered the tomb with confusion was not the same person as the 'chosen' Rock who addressed the crowd in Jerusalem. We are sometimes like Peter, unsure and confused when we are far from Jesus but steady and confident when we are with Christ. We must each ask, 'What can I do to become the renewed Peter'? Or even to challenge ourselves to ask **"How has my life changed this Easter?"** "In what way have I allowed the Lord to speak and touch me? Some may even be bolder still, "Why has there been no transformation or change in my life? St. Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians, reminds us that, because we are redeemed in Christ, we cannot remain the same. We have to "cleanse out the old leaven" so that we may have a "new lump..." Easter is meant to make a difference in our lives. We must remain true to our inner hearts and ask of ourselves, Are we making a difference in our lives and in the lives of people around us? †



Art: Johan Ludvig Lund (1777-1867), "The Resurrection of Christ" from Wikimedia Commons

Weekly WORD
How has my life changed this Easter?

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NEW WAY OF BEING CHURCH

2nd SUNDAY OF EASTER

B E D I S C I P L E S O F H O P E

Man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses.

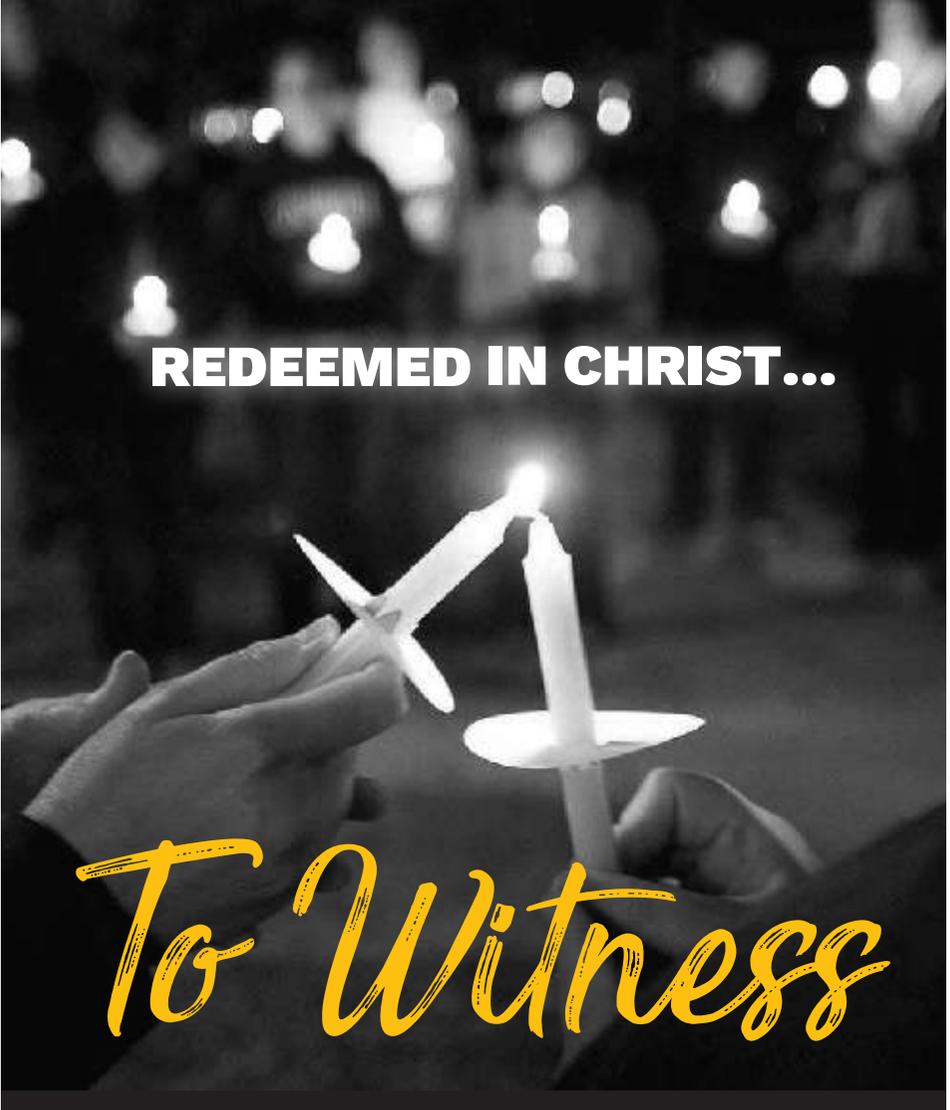
- Pope Paul VI

In this Sunday's gospel passage, we are presented the scene where Thomas, one of the apostles of Jesus, had doubts whether Jesus had risen from the dead and had appeared to the other disciples. Dubbed "Doubting Thomas" for his unbelief, Thomas is often portrayed in Christianity, as someone who lacks faith or who questions the tenets of faith. Yet, Thomas also represents those who seek clarity and truth in matters of the faith. In a world filled with views and opinions, which at times can obstruct or confuse believers, like Thomas, Christians have to critically and sincerely reflect on aspects of the faith. Faith and Reason do sometimes appear to collide.

We know that not every question related to faith can be answered by the use of reason or intellect only. As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states, "... there are many obstacles which prevent reason from the effective and fruitful use of this inborn faculty (CCC, 37). Nevertheless, we have to use our God-given faculties of intellect and reason to seek the truth. When Thomas asked for evidence that Jesus has risen, Jesus himself, although rebuking Thomas for his unbelief, did not deny Thomas the evidence he was seeking. In fact Jesus helped Thomas believe and He helps us everyday, as we too make sense of all that is happening in our lives.

As a people baptised in this light, we are called to present evidence of who we are and what we believe, so that others may believe in Christ. We do this through our words and actions. We do this with our lives, no matter our station.

In the first reading, the early Christian community demonstrated evidence of its faith in the way its members shared their possessions and cared for one another. In second reading, John writes that the key evidence Christians can show that they love one another is by loving God and by obeying His commandments. In other words, as Christians, we have to "walk the talk". Today, everyone, especially young people, are looking out for role-models. They are seeking people who are unafraid to be authentic witnesses of the truth,... and of Jesus. The evidence we present them through our lives will depict whether we have truly been redeemed in Christ. †



REDEEMED IN CHRIST...

To Witness

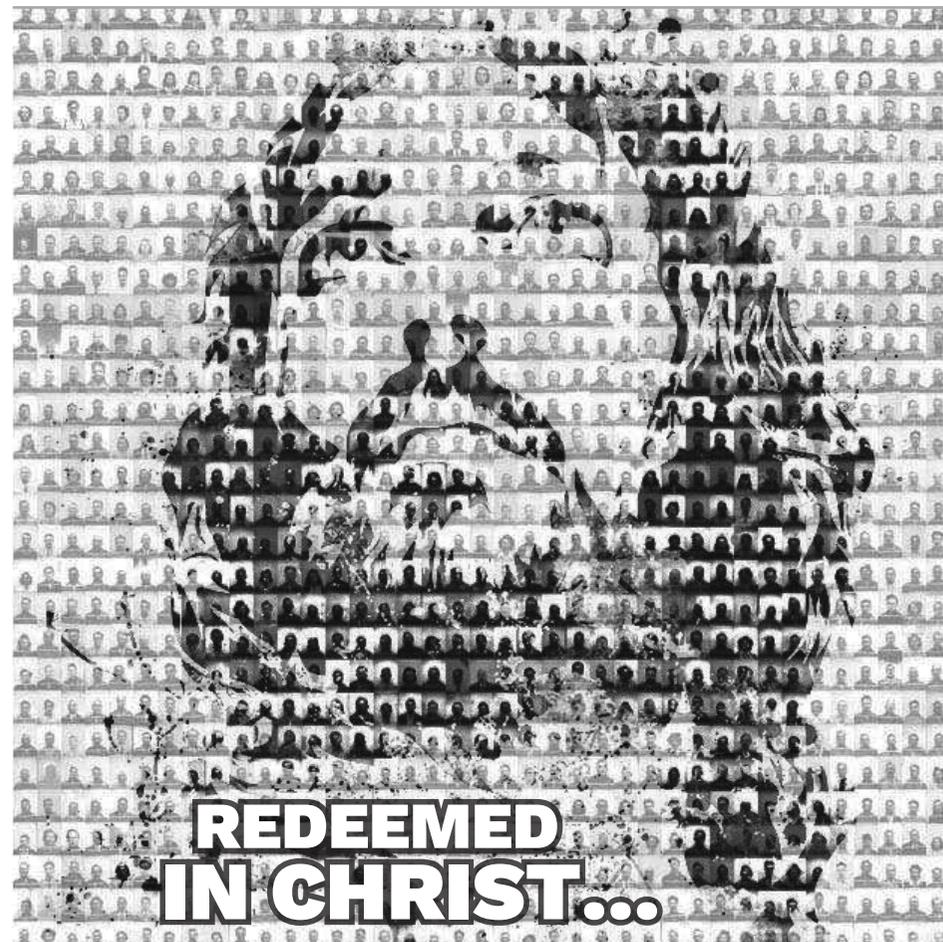
Weekly WORD Walk the Talk

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NEW WAY OF BEING CHURCH

3rd SUNDAY OF EASTER

B E D I S C I P L E S O F H O P E



To Recognise Him

Holiness does not consist in not making mistakes or never sinning... but grows with the capacity for conversion, repentance, willingness to begin again, and above all with the capacity for reconciliation and forgiveness.

- Pope Benedict XVI

The Gospel passage for this Sunday describes that the Risen Christ appeared to the disciples. A closer look at the passage shows how Jesus revealed himself to his disciples and how they responded to him. Firstly, he stood among them and said, "Peace be with you", at which the disciples were "startled and terrified" thinking he was a ghost. Next, Jesus assured them by asking them to look at his hands and feet. He even asks them to, "Touch me and see...", and showed them his hands and his feet. The response of the disciples was that, although they were joyful, they "were disbelieving and still wondering..."

Sensing they were still not convinced, Jesus asks them if they had anything to eat, and then in their presence, ate the fish they had given him. After this, Jesus reminded them about the words he had spoken when he was with them about himself. He "opened their minds to understand the scriptures" and taught that the Messiah had to suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and that the message of repentance and forgiveness is to be preached in His Name to all nations. And Jesus adds, "You are witnesses to these things". What an amazing encounter, yet that was only the beginning.

It is amazing how patiently the Risen Lord revealed Himself to his disciples who failed to recognise him, and to accept that he has Risen, even though he had taught them everything. Instead of reprimanding or rebuking them, Jesus gently reminds them of who he is and of his death and resurrection so that they might recognise him. In the first reading, Peter informs the people that although God had sent Jesus to us, the Holy and Righteous One, everyone failed to recognise him. Instead, they handed him to Pilate to be killed. In the second reading, John reminds Christians that we can know God if we obey His commandments. Christ is constantly revealing himself to us. Even today, he patiently speaks to us in many different ways. Like a gentle teacher he whispers to us things we sometimes just don't hear. The question remains, "How do I recognize Christ within me and in others"? †

Weekly
WORD

How do I recognize Christ
within me and in others?

Let us learn to live with kindness, to love everyone, even when they do not love us.

- Pope Francis

Occasionally, we meet acquaintances or friends who express doubt as to whether God loves them. Usually, uncertainties about God's love stems from the perception that God does not care for them or is not concerned about their needs. For example, a prayer or plea for a sick person or for financial needs may seem to have gone unanswered. Or a mishap or unfortunate event befalls the family. "Why me?" "Doesn't God care for me?" "Does God actually love me?" we ask.

The readings for this Sunday remind us that God simply does not think as we do. So God does not love as we humans imperfectly love. **God's perfect love is constant and unconditional.** How God expresses His love, however, is dependent upon His own will, wisdom and time. This can be seen in the highest expression of God's love for us, when He sent His only Son, Jesus, to redeem the world by dying on the cross. What greater sacrifice or higher form of love can there be?

It is because God the Father loves us, that through Jesus, we are called the children of God, as written in the first letter of John. It is because God loves us that the writer of the Acts of the Apostles, when speaking of Jesus, says, "There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved." It is because God loves us that Jesus himself says, "I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep,"....for us!

In a world where the word 'love' has different meaning for different people, what is certain is that God loves us! If He did not, then He would not have sent Jesus to redeem us. Yes, we may wonder whether God loves us as we are look for certain pieces of a jig-saw puzzle which are missing in our lives. God sees and looks, however, beyond our 'missing' pieces' onto the complete picture. And because He loves us, His picture is more beautiful than we can ever imagine! †

Weekly WORD

God's perfect love is constant and unconditional.

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NEW WAY OF BEING CHURCH

4th SUNDAY OF EASTER

B E D I S C I P L E S O F H O P E



REDEEMED IN CHRIST...

TO LOVE & BE LOVED

Image: ©iStock.com

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NEW WAY OF BEING CHURCH

5th SUNDAY OF EASTER

B E D I S C I P L E S O F H O P E

Christ is calling you, the church needs you, the Pope believes in you and he expects great things of you.

- Pope John Paul I

In this Sunday's Gospel passage, the word "abide" appears eight times. The word comes from the old English word 'a-bid', which means: 'await', 'remain', 'lodge', 'sojourn', 'dwell', 'continue' and 'endure.' It also means: "to put with", "to wait patiently", "to remain in place", "to continue to exist", "to conform", "to comply", "to reside", "to remain faithful", "to sustain" and "without yielding".

Every interpretation seems to indicate that the word 'abide' is connected to something that is strong, fixed, firm, enduring, permanent, existing and rooted in place. It cannot be easily moved or shaken. Therefore, when Jesus says "Abide in me", he speaks about a relationship that is bound so tightly, strong and unyielding, that regardless the circumstances and challenges of life, it endures.

It means that if we settle for a superficial relationship with Jesus, in a way, we become less than useful disciples of Jesus. As Jesus says, "Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered and thrown into the fire and burnt." Here, Jesus is referring to the practice of wine-growers who prune or cut off the weaker branches, so that the vine, the most important part of the plant, becomes strong, healthy and productive. In other words, branches with 'weak' connections to the vine are removed.

"What type of relationship do I have with Jesus?" "Is it one that is strong, firm and fixed on him regardless the circumstances of life?" If yes, then God will prune you to become stronger, firmer and more enduring in your discipleship. However, if your relationship is dependent on your emotions, feelings and moods, and you find yourself not trusting him when times are tough, then your discipleship to Jesus may be weak and fragile.

God wants us to become healthy and productive branches, joined closely and firmly with Jesus. We are reminded that it is not enough for us to be a Christian in name only, but that we must 'abide' in Jesus and allow Jesus to 'abide in us'. We have to become so fixed to him that nothing or no one can shake, break or separate us from his everlasting love. So with this reasoning and understanding, **"do you truly abide in Jesus?"** †

Weekly
WORD

Do you truly
abide in Jesus?

