

John 20:19-23 (NRSV)

¹⁹ When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." ²⁰ After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. ²¹ Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." ²² When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³ If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

Questions for Reflection:

1) Why do you suppose the doors were locked? (*Afraid they would be next ones arrested, Unsure of what Mary's announcement meant, Afraid without Jesus to lead them, etc.*)

- What are some things that we do that are motivated by fear?
- When we act or speak motivated by fear, what happens? Give some examples.
- Rather than fear, what should motivate us? (*Love, Courage, Faith, Grace, Power, etc.*)

2) Why do you think Jesus showed the disciples his wounds? (*To prove it was him, To remind them that he had been killed, that he had really died, To reassure them, To alleviate their fear, To give them confidence, etc.*)

- How are we reminded of Jesus' wounds?
- How does Jesus show us "his hands and his side" today?
- What does this kind of revelation do for us?

3) Jesus says, "As the Father has sent me, so I send you." What do you think it meant for Jesus to send his disciples like God had sent him? (*Sent to the world to announce the good news, Sent as an ambassador on behalf of God, Sent to forgive, Sent to lay down your life for others, etc.*)

- With what does Jesus entrust his disciples in doing this?
- Do you think it was difficult or easy for Jesus to send his disciples in this way?
- How does this statement relate to the mission of the church today?
- How are we sent in the way God sent Jesus?

4) What exactly do the disciples receive from Jesus when he breathes on them saying, "Receive the Holy Spirit"? (*Power, Encouragement, Energy, Himself, A part of God-Trinity, Air/Breath/Wind/Life, etc.*)

- What does this gift do for the disciples?
- What do they gain from this gift? What does it empower them to do?
- How does the church receive the Holy Spirit today?
- What ways do you sense the power of the Holy Spirit in the world?

5) What does forgiving someone of their sin do? (*Releases from guilt, Allows you to move on, Offers grace and love, Frees people from the burden, etc.*)

- Why would Jesus mention "retaining" sins in this context?
- What does it mean to "retain" someone's sin? Why do the disciples have this capacity?

(*Note: The word "retain" (Gk. krateo) is not an uncommon word in the New Testament, but this is the only time that John uses it in his Gospel. How he intends it to be read is therefore a bit unclear.*)