

Lectionary readings: Acts 4: 32-35; Psalm 133; 1 John 1: 1-2: 2; John 20: 19-31

For reflection and prayer

- **Acts 4:** Here is a picture of the church as God would have us be: all filled with grace, all of one heart and mind (not all believing the same things, but united and one in love), concerned for one another, having a spirit of generosity and unselfishness, living in real communion with God and with one another, conscious of the risen Christ in our midst and profoundly changed by the presence of the risen Christ. This is God's grace at work. Let's pray this week that we will open ourselves to the grace which God has already poured into each one of us.
- **Psalm 133:** v1: *'How wonderful it is, how pleasant, when brothers (and sisters) live together in harmony.'* This is God's vision for us to accept one another, to reach out in love to one another, to see God in one another, to encourage and affirm one another. It's when love is flowing among us that people outside will be drawn. Let's open ourselves more and more to God's love and reach out with that love to all - not only those in the church, but everyone we meet. Let's be Christ to them. Let's see God in them.
- **1 John 1 - 2:** One of the joys of the Christian life is that we can share in the deep communion that existed between God and Jesus. And this is God's desire for us that we have this close, intimate relationship with Him that Jesus enjoyed. And having this experience of communion with God means that we will share in

communion with others. John says that we will never be free of sin, but we have this confidence that, if we are willing to acknowledge our sins, God is only too ready to forgive us. And then we are invited to go out and forgive others. This is what it means to live in the light and to live the resurrection life.

- **John 20:** The disciples are locked behind closed doors, filled with fear. So often our hearts are closed up, locked to others, locked even to ourselves, because we have allowed fear, or anger, or bitterness etc. to take hold of us. And Jesus comes to us, as He came to the disciples, and says, *'Peace to you.'* The result for the disciples was immediate - their fear left them. Their beloved Lord was alive and present with them. The Lord can also turn our lives around and transform us by His presence. Let's ask God to give us eyes to see Him present with us where we are so that we allow Him to turn our fear into faith, our sorrow into joy. As Jesus breathed on His disciples, so He has breathed on us His Holy Spirit so that we can go out and offer forgiveness to those who have hurt us. If we can't or won't forgive others, we will find our unforgiveness will remain on us like a heavy weight. Jesus met Thomas where he was, in his doubt, and showed Thomas His wounds. He wants to meet us just where we are, however we are feeling, whatever doubts we may have, so let's be honest with God this week about what is going on inside us and let Jesus come close to us with His healing grace. Jesus says to us that greater blessings are ours if we are willing to walk by faith, not seeking proof. So let's open ourselves to the risen Christ this week in our times of doubt and struggle, confusion and chaos, darkness and unbelief, and embrace Him as He embraces us.