

April 7 John 20 19-31; Acts 4 vs 43-35 Sharing What we Have

What makes a Church a community? Is it the buildings? Is it the people? To some degree of course both of these are necessary but today's readings suggest that the foundation of our community is an active faith. Acts 4 verses 32-35 speaks of a community where people shared their possessions. *With Love to the World* states that it 'takes place within a context of social solidarity where Christ's followers shared their personal possessions and resources'. Pastor Simon Moetara, author of the reflection on this passage goes on to say 'Tom Wright describes the church as a single multi-ethnic family promised by the creator God to Abraham'.¹ I think there is definitely something of this that applies to our Church here. We have people from many ethnicities among us. Only two Sundays ago, some of us were privileged to attend the 28th Anniversary of the Korean Congregation here on Sunday afternoon. This was a magnificent celebration which reflected our first reading today almost to the letter. The congregation bought food with them for the occasion and the main section of the hall was transformed into a dining room and all shared in the meal and we were also most fortunate to receive a commemorative hand towel specially embroidered for the occasion. It is the sharing of food and possessions which is alluded to in the Bible passage but there are of course many other ways in which we can share what we have. One thing we can share freely is our time and compassion in listening to and looking after each other. Many years ago we had a Saint David's Youth Group Camp at Brown House in the Kahuterawa Valley. I still recall one evening when John James, leader of the Youth Group asked us 'what is the most valuable thing you can give?' The immediate answer which came to my mind was my trumpet, then the most materially valuable item I owned. John, however, had a much different and indeed much more profound answer. 'The most valuable thing you can give people' he stated 'is your time'. That has always stayed with me and it does again seem characteristic of our Church. The cup of tea and assorted food and biscuits following the morning service may not formally be part of our Church service, but they are most certainly a place where faith is actively expressed. Those rostered on each week are facilitating a valuable ministry in their own right and I would like to acknowledge their contribution today. It is in the conversations we have there, the quiet word to check on someone who has recently experienced loss; following up an earlier conversation to see what has happened in someone's life; making practical arrangements for visits so

¹ Pastor Simon Moetara, *With Love to the World*, Vol 17, No.6, 2024, p. 39

household tasks can be attended to. These are things of great value and are in themselves expressions of an active faith. And when I look out at the congregation today, I see many people who have supported myself, Haklyka and Nadia. And when you look around I am sure you will see someone who has been there for you at some time. The reading from Acts reminds us never to underestimate the power of sharing what we have. The smallest act, be it a kindly smile, an expression of sympathy, an encouraging word can make a material difference to someone.

The second of our readings relates clearly to the first. Thomas is seeking a physical sign of Jesus' presence so he can go on to live an active faith. It is all too easy to see Thomas in a critical light, as a disciple of God who lacked the faith one might reasonably have expected from someone in his position. Yet who among us cannot honestly say we have not felt similar sentiments to Thomas at some time? Thomas is reflecting our humanity, our frailties, our underlying insecurity. It is particularly apt that we have this passage so close to Easter. Yes, Jesus had reappeared to his disciples, but they had only recently experienced his death and resurrection and had had to reflect on their conduct in those times. They would not have been human if they had not been deeply anxious as to how their then infant Church was going to fare. In Thomas' plea for the physical presence of God we see the deep yearning of the believer, in Jesus' reply 'How Happy are those who believe without seeing me' we see his reassurance of his ongoing presence among Christians, albeit not in physical form. So when we reassure and uphold each other as Christians, by the many great and small acts we perform for each other, we are in a sense living an active faith, providing a physical sign of God's love and care for us all. Let us now take a brief moment to silently thank and acknowledge all those who have done this for us in the past, and allow me to take the liberty of thanking you all I advance for your ongoing love and support for one another as part of the body of Christ. Amen.