

## Scripture Reading

### A Reading from the Gospel according to John (John 20:19-23)

On the evening of that first day of the week, when the doors were locked, where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, "Peace be with you." When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side. The disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent Me, so I send you." And when He had said this, He breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained." The Gospel of the Lord. R. Praise to You, Lord Jesus Christ.

### Reflection ~ Jesus gives us power over our sins

**The first thing Jesus did after the Resurrection.** When Jesus appeared to the Apostles after His Resurrection, He did not waste much time asking them why they deserted Him at the time when He needed them the most. He forgave their human weakness and moved quickly on to His next step in God's plan of salvation. Without hesitation, He gave to His Apostles the Holy Spirit and bestowed upon them the divine power to forgive sins. Undoubtedly, the Apostles were overwhelmed since they were just reminded that they too were sinners when they deserted Jesus out of fear for their own safety. By now, however, they would have known that at the Last Supper, Jesus had made them His priests when He said: "Do this in memory of Me." (cf. Luke 22:19). The urgency with which Jesus instituted the Sacrament of Confession (Reconciliation) demonstrates the degree of importance God attaches to true repentance of sins and the removal of sins from the souls of His children. God's mercy is conditional upon true repentance. Because God bestows free will on His children, He will not force His mercy and salvation on His children. Thus, repentance is so important in the eyes of God that it was the first and last topic of Jesus' preaching. *"And that repentance, for the forgiveness of sins, would be preached in His Name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem."* (Luke 24:47).

**Why sin is the worst thing on earth.** One of the diabolical tricks of Satan is to promote the falsehood that there is no absolute right or wrong – the relativism of moral values – and that it depends on how you look at it. He promotes denial of the existence of sin, the trivializing of sin, and makes people get used to sin and tolerate it within their souls. We may think that physical evil/ills such as human suffering, catastrophes, loss of possessions, deprivation of human needs and rights, etc. are the worst evils. However, these physical evil can never separate us from the love of God, and if we accept them as trials coming from God, we meritoriously partake in the suffering of Christ and win spiritual merit for ourselves and for other souls. On the other hand, we cannot say the same of sins and moral evil. Whether a sin is committed in private or public, known or unknown, it affects everyone adversely and separates the sinner from the love of God. Thus, when God punishes a whole nation, everyone in it gets punished. Similarly when God blesses a nation, everyone in it benefited. God takes sins very seriously because it is the only thing which can directly corrupt our precious souls and separates us from Him.

**Sin bears its own punishment and a greater punishment after life on earth.** Anyone who has committed a grave sin feels guilty. The internal peace is lost and life is not the same unless the sin is removed by God through sincere repentance of the sinner. Many souls persist in unrepentance because of ignorance and spiritual blindness and weakness. As a result, the world continues to deviate from what God created it to be. From a good place to live in, it becomes a place where violence, greed, arrogance, self-centredness, rebellion, indifference to God, impurity, the giving in to unruly human passions and lusts, deception, false ideologies and false things that stand against God and His goodness become commonplace. The sadness of our present world is due to the cumulative effects of human selfishness, unrepented sins and the failure to give God His proper place in human lives. After death when there is no more opportunity to repent, unrepented souls endure a higher intensity of suffering due to the lack of the presence of God which the soul craves. Indeed we are made by God and for God.

**Conversation with Jesus:** Precious Lord, only You alone can take away my sins because You redeem me by Your precious Blood. You give me the highest degree of freedom when You free me from all my sins. Immediately after Your Resurrection, You confer divine power on the Apostles to forgive sins on Your behalf, thus instituting the Sacrament of Reconciliation (Confession). In the Confessional, the greatest of miracles takes place as the power of Your grace restores a repentant soul corrupted by sins to its former beauty and purity. Give me the grace of true repentance so that I can remain in Your love and live in the newness of life. Help me to detest sin like You do, and understand that no sin comes without a price which You paid with Your own suffering and Blood. May I cleanse my soul frequently in this amazing fountain of grace and mercy. Mary, Mother of Salvation, pray for me. Thank You, Jesus. Praise You, Jesus. [www.twohearts.hk](http://www.twohearts.hk)