

Second Sunday of Easter – Year A

In the Gospel of St. John, the point when the glorified Jesus appears to the disciples and breathes the Holy Spirit onto them is equivalent to Pentecost in St. Luke's second book, the Acts of the Apostles. As St. Cyril of Alexandria writes: "God's plan of salvation for the world had been fulfilled, but it was God's will that we should participate in the divine nature of the Word, leaving our old way of life behind to enter into a new and holy life. This transformation could be brought about only through the gift of the Holy Spirit" (*Commentarium in Ioannem*, 10).

This is similar to what St. Peter writes in his first letter, which the Church invites us to read in the Office of Readings during the Octave of Easter: "Gird the loins of your understanding; live soberly; set all your hope on the gift to be conferred on you when Jesus Christ appears. As obedient sons and daughters, do not yield to the desires that once shaped you in your ignorance. Rather, become holy yourselves in every aspect of your conduct, after the likeness of the holy One who called you; remember, Scripture says, 'Be holy, for I am holy.'"

To "be holy" means to be "set apart", particularly, to be set apart for God and for his purposes. Thus, Christians have been reborn and endowed with a great dignity; they have been set apart for God and to participate in his life.

Such participation is not due to any merit of our own, but to the total gift of his grace. By accepting this gift, we will experience a peace that our world cannot offer, for it is a peace that comes only from our resurrected and glorified Lord: "Peace be with you" (John 20:19).

Father Frei