

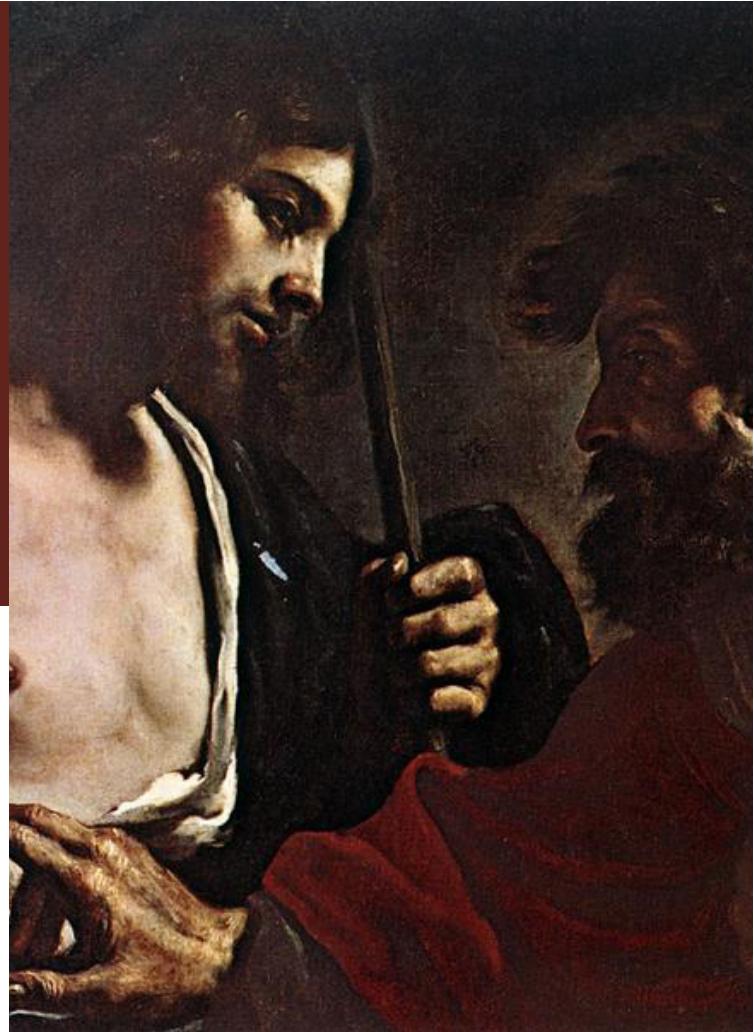
SATURDAY, APRIL 22, 2017

SATURDAY
WITHIN THE OCTAVE
OF EASTER

1. ACTS 4:13-21

2. MARK 16:9-15

GOSPEL RELATED: CCC 643,
645, 659, 977, 888, 1223



FOCUS: I BELIEVE LORD, HELP MY UNBELIEF. (MK 9:24)

The magnitude of the great solemnity of Easter is such that it cannot be contained in just one day. In fact, it is given an entire season, 50 days, beginning with Easter Sunday, and ending with Pentecost. Easter is the central feast of our Christian faith. During this season, we hear how Jesus helped the Apostles to carry on his work. We also witness the determination of Peter, John and the others to do as Jesus taught them. Each day of the Easter season reveals some particular aspect of the mystery of Christ, and in today's liturgy we hear about the Risen Lord beckoning the 11 – and us – to believe in him and to share the Gospel with the whole world.

Our first reading, from the Acts of the Apostles, acknowledges that this will not always be easy. Peter and John are glorifying God and healing, preaching and teaching in the name of Jesus. But the religious leaders are opposed to their speaking anything in his name. This conflict in belief set up a tension that would eventually lead to the persecution

of the Apostles. The religious leaders admitted that a remarkable sign was done through Peter and John. They even said they could not deny the fact that a man had been cured who stood in their midst. What they chose to deny, however, was that the power of the Risen Christ was the source of the healing.

Along these lines, it is important to remember that even Peter, John and the rest of the Apostles were hesitant to believe that Jesus had risen. We see this in today's Gospel. Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene early on the first day of the week. We hear few details, but we are told that Mary Magdalene believed what she saw and went to tell the Eleven. They could not bring themselves to believe that Jesus was alive. Then, on the way to the country, Jesus appeared to two unnamed disciples.

Like Mary Magdalene, they, too, tell the Apostles, only to be rebuffed. It was only when Jesus appeared to the Apostles personally that they came to believe.

Most of us can easily identify with those who were slow to believe. Yet, once they opened themselves to the Holy Spirit working in and through them, the Apostles became unshakeable laborers in God's vineyard. Jesus told them to go into the world and share the Gospel with every creature. They no longer hesitated. They became the courageous and bold preachers of the Gospel and leaders of the Church they were called to be. We, too, can be strengthened to boldly give witness to the Gospel. We need to call on God's grace to change our hearts so we may do so.



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