

Sunday 7th April 2024; Easter 2; BCP Holy Communion
Stonegrave

Today is The Second Sunday of Easter is the eighth day of the season of [Eastertide](#), and the seventh after [Easter Sunday](#). It is known by various names, including Divine Mercy Sunday, the Octave Day of Easter, White Sunday, and as ‘Low Sunday’,

Today if may be so bold I would like to call it, ‘Affirmation Sunday’ because the readings today are all about words of ‘affirmation’.

In the reading from the Book of Acts we read, ‘With great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord.’ They told their story of how the Resurrection of Jesus had changed their lives forever and now they would live out that change as a community.

We all have our own testimony too, our own story of how our relationship with Jesus has changed our lives which we affirm each day in words and action, building up our own community. We use words of affirmation that communicate love, compassion, appreciation, and respect for another person to uplift them. Affirmation is the strengthening of another person and through being receptive and open to the goodness of that person being able to reveal that you have been affected or moved by them. Therefore, affirmation can move both ways between individuals and is usually a sentence of powerful words put together, and this sentence is aimed to motivate, to challenge, to push you or I to reach our full potential in life.

In our Gospel today we have the perfect and ultimate words of affirmation, when the risen Jesus Christ tells His disciples, “Peace, be with you” as they were gathered in a locked room fearful and broken and they are given courage

through these few words of affirmation. He literally 'speaks life' because he gives them not just words but breathes the power of the Holy Spirit into them to transform them to send them out into the world to proclaim his saving love to affirm not just by words but by deeds. Thomas too after his initial scepticism famously affirms Jesus as his Lord and his God.

By speaking the words, 'Peace be with you', Jesus gives His word, He affirms in the most majestic and powerful way, because His words come from His Father. These words matter like no others can or ever will. Our words can heal, or they can destroy and sometimes they can change lives for good or ill, revealing our true self and our real motivations.

When I give you my word to you, I give you a truth that lies deep at the centre of my being that I seek to share with you. So much more then does God in His Word made flesh, in Jesus. I can give you my word of honour so that you can believe and trust me so how much more will it be when God gives His Word? He does this in and through His son, Jesus Christ, who knew what it was to live, to suffer and to die. When Jesus says, 'Peace be with you', He says to all humanity, 'Trust me. I give you my word that you are loved. Even when that seems unlikely or even impossible, even when life is at its darkest and most perverse. I am beside you and whose life is within you; beside you whether you believe or whether you doubt, when you are content and when you are depressed, when you grieve and when you rejoice, at all times and in all places, I will be beside you in your dying and through and beyond your death. God affirms through His Son the words, 'Trust me. I give you my Word' and speaks life.

In the beginning was the Word, and it is the Word that has risen from the grave and gives life and affirms us, in this world and the next. For us in the end is silence, when all our halting, approximate words, even the finest and memorable of them, come to an end but in the ensuing silence, in Jesus Christ our risen Lord, we will then affirm for eternity with Thomas, 'My Lord and my God'.

Thanks be to God. Amen.