

Lectionary readings: Acts 2: 14a, 22-32; Psalm 16; 1 Peter 1: 3-9; John 20: 19-31

For reflection and prayer

- **Acts 2:** What a change in the disciples. Before, they were locked in an upper room filled with fear. Now they are boldly and fearlessly proclaiming the Good News of Jesus' resurrection. They have been set free. And we, too, can be set free from guilt, fears, anxieties because the risen Christ is with us, filling us with the life of God. We can be changed, made new, turned around, by having a new perspective and being filled with hope. Our own lives, our church, our society, our world can be different for God is holding out to us the gift of His life, His risen presence. And through us people can know a different way of seeing, can be filled with hope and joy and peace. May we let Christ change us this week by His risen presence.
- **Psalm 16:** *'You do show me the paths I must take, O Lord. Within Your all-embracing presence lies genuine fulfilment. In my relationship with You I discover incomparable and eternal joy.'* (v11 Psalms Now) *'Thus my heart is glad, and my soul rejoices; I shall not be afraid, nor fall into the pit of despair; in Love's presence there is fullness of joy. You are my Beloved; in You will I live.'* (v9-11 Psalms for Praying) This is one of my favourite Psalms. These verses speak of the joy and delight we can know in our relationship with God, our Beloved. Fear and despair give way to confidence when we remember we are in the hands of a loving God. May that fill us with hope this week.

- **1 Peter 1:** *'What a God we have! And how fortunate we are to have Him.'* (v3 The Message) Is this how we feel about God, the God who has come to us in Jesus? He shows us how we can be made new here and now; we can experience healing and wholeness in this life. All the experiences we go through in life - and the people Peter was addressing would have been suffering persecution - can be transformed through the presence of the risen Christ. This is the same Peter who failed Jesus miserably - as we all do. But God does not write anyone off; He always gives us another chance, and another, and another ... So let's take God's hand as we go through this week and let His presence fill us with new life, new hope, new joy.
- **John 20:** How often I have felt fear, even panic, and then, having prayed and shared the problem with God, I have in time been led to a wonderful sense of peace. This is similar to what these frightened disciples must have felt at the realisation that Jesus was present, their fear turning to joy. Jesus breathed His Spirit into them - the breath of life, God's gift of Himself to them, the breath of forgiveness. They are forgiven and they are invited to go out and breathe forgiveness on others. This is God's invitation to the church - receive the forgiveness of God and go out and forgive others. There is in each one of us a 'doubting Thomas': we would like proof. Jesus comes to us every moment breathing His Spirit into us. Let's rise up in the power of His Spirit to be love, forgiveness, life for others. May God in His grace and love meet with each of us and fill us with Himself so that *'life begins to fill our lungs, as we breathe in, standing in His presence, inhaling the fragrance of God's own life.'* (Jane Williams)