

April 3, 2016 Second Sunday of Easter

The Collect: Almighty and everlasting God, who in the Paschal mystery established the new covenant of reconciliation: Grant that all who have been reborn into the fellowship of Christ's Body may show forth in their lives what they profess by their faith; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

First Lesson: Acts 5:27-32 read from the Modern English Version Bible

When they had brought them, they stood them before the Sanhedrin. And the high priest questioned them, saying, "Did we not strictly command you not to teach in this name? Yet now you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and you intend to bring on us this Man's blood."

Peter and the other apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised Jesus, whom you killed by hanging on a tree. God exalted this Man to His right hand to be a Ruler and a Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. We are His witnesses to these words, as is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him."

The Word of the Lord

Psalm 150: read from The Episcopal Church Book of Common Prayer

- 1 Hallelujah! Praise God in his holy temple; * praise him in the firmament of his power.
- 2 Praise him for his mighty acts; * praise him for his excellent greatness.
- 3 Praise him with the blast of the ram's-horn; * praise him with lyre and harp.
- 4 Praise him with timbrel and dance; * praise him with strings and pipe.
- 5 Praise him with resounding cymbals; * praise him with loud-clanging cymbals.
- 6 Let everything that has breath * praise the Lord.

Hallelujah!

Epistle: Revelation 1:4-8 read from the New American Standard Bible

John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace, from Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne, and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us and released us from our sins by His blood—and He has made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father—to Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen. Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. So it is to be. Amen.

“I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.”

The Word of the Lord

Gospel: John 20:19-31 read from the New Century Version Bible

When it was evening on the first day of the week, Jesus' followers were together. The doors were locked, because they were afraid of the elders. Then Jesus came and stood right in the middle of them and said, “Peace be with you.” After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. His followers were thrilled when they saw the Lord.

Then Jesus said again, “Peace be with you. As the Father sent me, I now send you.” After he said this, he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven. If you don't forgive them, they are not forgiven.”

Thomas (called Didymus), who was one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. The other followers kept telling Thomas, “We saw the Lord.”

But Thomas said, “I will not believe it until I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were and put my hand into his side.”

A week later the followers were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. The doors

were locked, but Jesus came in and stood right in the middle of them. He said, "Peace be with you." Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here, and look at my hands. Put your hand here in my side. Stop being an unbeliever and believe."

Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!"

Then Jesus told him, "You believe because you see me. Those who believe without seeing me will be truly blessed."

Jesus did many other miracles in the presence of his followers that are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. Then, by believing, you may have life through his name.

The Gospel of the Lord

Closing Prayer: On April 5th we celebrate the life of Pandita Mary Ramabai, social reformer and evangelist in India.

Pandita Ramabai born April 23rd, 1858 was an eminent Indian Christian social reformer and activist. She was a poet, a scholar, and a champion of improvement in the plight of Indian women. As a social reformer, she championed the cause of emancipation of Indian women. A widely traveled woman, she visited most parts of India, and even went to England in 1883 and visited the United States from 1886-1888. She wrote many books including her popular work titled *The High Caste Hindu Woman*, which showed the darkest of subject matter relating to the life of Hindu women, including child brides and the treatment they receive by the government. She had a strong view of what should be accomplished so women would be able to have more freedom, including protection of widowed women and child brides.

Pandita was born into an intellectual Brahmin family. Her father believed that women should have an education and against traditional Hindu social structure he taught Pandita how to read and write Sanskrit. Her father, mother and sister died of starvation during the famine of 1874-76, she and her brother traveled India and eventually ending up in Calcutta.

After her brother's death in 1880, even though it was considered inappropriate for a Hindu to marry into a lower caste, she married, on November 13th, 1880, Babu Medhavi, a Bengali lawyer, who was not a Brahmin. Six months after the birth of their daughter, Babu died, and Pandita was once again left with just one family member.

She received a scholarship to study in England, and during her time there, she converted to Christianity but did not ever lose sight of her goals for the social system in India. She clung to her roots and when she returned to India she helped establish Christian Churches which used Sanskrit writing instead of traditional Latin which was used in England. Pandita attempted to combine her new Christian ideals with her old Indian Culture and used this mix to promote change in India. Being raised in the Brahman caste made her uniquely able to bring both men and women to Christianity due to the caste's image as social leaders.

In addition to her writing in 1881 she founded the very first Indian feminist organization. She studied as well as taught about the issues which surround Indian women especially those involved in the Hindu traditions. She spoke against women who were forced to marry young and/or widowed young and wrote about the struggle involved in their lives.

She established the Mukti Mission in 1889 as a refuge for young widows who were abused by their families. In her native language, the word mukti means liberation. *The Pandita Ramabai Mukti Mission* is still active today, providing housing, education, vocational training, and medical services, for many needy groups including widows, orphans, and the blind.

Let us pray: Everliving God, you called the women at the tomb to witness to the resurrection of your Son: We thank you for the courageous and independent spirit of your servant Pandita Ramabai, the mother of modern India; and we pray that we, like her, may embrace your gift of new life, caring for the poor, braving resentment to uphold the dignity of women, and offering the riches of our culture to our Savior Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**