

**We live in  
the mystery  
of God who  
gives life.**

2nd Sunday of Easter



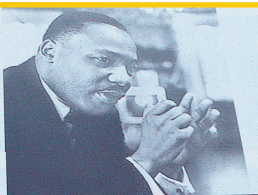
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# SPIRIT



*Repeat the words in the big star at each star.*

From the beginning when the Spirit stirs the waters of the deep and the Creator  
breathes life into the first human ✨ From the beginning of faith when Sarah and  
Abraham cling to God's promise to give them a child and God looks out for Hagar in the wilderness  
✨ From the first resistance to slavery when Hebrew midwives refuse to kill their sons ✨ When  
prophets such as Isaiah and Jeremiah call Israel's kings and people to care for the poor ✨ When  
God shows a way home for the Israelites exiled in Babylon ✨ When Mary gives birth to Jesus in a  
stable among animals and poor shepherds with Joseph at her side ✨ When the Spirit rests upon  
Jesus to bring good news to the poor ✨ When Jesus forgives his friends on Easter evening for  
abandoning him at his arrest ✨ When witnesses spread the good news that Jesus is risen from  
Asia to Europe and Africa ✨ When James, Peter, Paul, Felicity, Perpetua, and countless others  
give their lives for their faith in Jesus ✨ When Constantine becomes a Christian and Christianity  
an accepted religion in the Roman Empire ✨ When missionaries such as Patrick to the Celts,  
Boniface to the Germans, and Cyril and Methodius to the Slavs bring Christian faith to barbarian  
tribes ✨ When Melanie frees her slaves on all the estates of her rich Roman family and, like her  
grandmother, founds a monastery for women who want to pray and study the Bible ✨ When  
Benedict and his followers open monasteries to give hospitality, preserve learning, and sing God's  
praises ✨ When Francis and his friars befriend the poor and stand for nonviolence while others  
crusade to kill Muslims and Jews ✨ When women in the middle ages form  
communities to serve the poor ✨ When Columbus discovers a world new to  
him but brings smallpox that kills 90% of the native peoples ✨ When white  
Christians accept slavery in the new world and begin capturing, buying, and  
selling Africans in the Americas ✨ When missionaries build a church at St.  
Augustine, Florida, and Junipero Serra founds missions along the California  
coast ✨ When waves of Catholic immigrants homestead the prairies and  
mountains that native peoples thought belonged  
to the Great Spirit ✨ When Sisters and Brothers educate generations of  
immigrants as Catholics and citizens ✨ When African Americans walk hand  
in hand to claim their civil rights ✨ When we continue the mission Jesus  
sends us to do on Easter, struggle for reconciliation, justice, and new life  
among among our kin on Earth. ✨ Holy God, keep us in your love. Amen.



"In the End, we will  
remember not the words  
of our enemies, but the  
silence of our friends."  
Martin Luther King, Jr.  
(1929-1968)



istock photo

# Helping Firsthand

by Jessica LaRonde

**O**n August 15, 2007, an 8.0 magnitude earthquake hit the coast of Peru,

devastating Pisco and Chincha, two cities located about 200 miles south of Lima, the capital of Peru. In Chincha alone, about 80,000 families lost their homes. Walls made of mud brick crumbled. A thousand people were killed, 105 in Chincha, the city where my aunt, Sister Pauline Coulterman, did mission work for 23 years.

Relief started to reach Chincha after a few days. People could get food, water, blankets, medicines and tents at 15 shelter stations. To eat, 300-400 people huddled around one common pot. We heard these stories six months later when my classmate and friend Lana Johnstone and I journeyed to Peru with my aunt, taking money to build a school.

In September, as the school year started at Opeongo High School in Douglas, Ontario, our Interact Club went into action. Affiliated with the



A resident of Chincha stands in her backyard still filled with rubble from the earthquake.

local Rotary, this club enables students to make a difference around the world. Each year the club chooses a project, for which we actively raise money.

Being proud members of the Interact Club, Lana and I proposed that the club undertake raising funds for the people in Chincha. I put together a presentation on the effects of the earthquake on the Peruvian people to share with club members and the student body. The club unanimously

agreed that Peru would be a great cause. Before Lana and I left on our journey, the club raised \$750 for building a schoolhouse in Chincha.

**O**n February 1, 2008, we left the raging snowstorms and below 20 temperatures at home in Canada and welcomed the hot and

humid climate of Lima. My aunt, Sister Pauline, a Sister of St. Joseph of Pembroke, was our mentor and guardian. In her years in Peru, she started a scholarship program for school children, a senior home, and other projects.

Once settled in at the convent of Las Hermanas de San José in Chincha Alta with Hermana Gloria and Hermana María, we met with the local parish priest, Padre Santiago, and our contractor so we could collaborate on the building plans. The Interact Club funds would build a preschool for toddlers and children with special needs.

Lana and I saw this project through to its very end. We assisted with measuring, hammering, and





# SUNDAY GOSPEL

2nd Sunday of Easter

## Jesus sends his friends forth.

**Narrator 1:** On the evening of that first day of the week, even though the disciples had locked the doors of the place where they were for fear of the officials, Jesus came and stood before them.

**Jesus:** Peace be with you.

**Narrator 2:** When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. The disciples rejoiced.

**Jesus:** Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.

**Narrator 1:** Then Jesus breathed on them.

**Jesus:** Receive the Holy Spirit.

If you forgive the sins of others, they are

forgiven them; if you hold them bound, they are held bound.

**Narrator 2:** It happened that one of Jesus' followers, Thomas (the name means twin), was absent when Jesus came.

**Other Disciples:** We have seen the Lord!

**Thomas:** I'll never believe it without probing the nail prints in his hands, without putting my finger in the nail marks and my hand into his side.

**Narrator 1:** A week later, the disciples were once more in the room. This time Thomas was with them. Despite the locked doors, Jesus came and stood before them.

**Jesus:** Peace be with you. Take your finger, Thomas, and examine my hands. Put your hand into my side. Do not persist in your unbelief but believe!

**Thomas:** My Lord and my God!

**Jesus:** You became a believer because you saw me. Blessed are they who have not seen and have believed.

**Narrator 2:** Jesus performed other signs as well—signs not recorded here—in the presence of his disciples. But these have been recorded to help you believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, so that through this faith you may have life in his name.

John 20.19-31

varnishing the walls and helped out with final touches. On March 3, 2008 (two days before we returned home), we gathered with teachers, parents, and children for the grand opening. Their smiles, laughter, and signs of gratitude were humbling as we watched our Canadian flag fly along with the Peruvian flag on top of the schoolhouse.

Along with building the school, we assisted with the scholarship program for children. Many people from our home Diocese of Pembroke support children in Peru. Their donations help purchase school uniforms, school supplies, and supplies for teachers. Lana and I fitted and gave away about 90 pairs of shoes that we brought in our suitcases as well as clothing, toys, and supplies.

With Hermanas María and Gloria we visited each child's home, met their families, witnessed the conditions of their living environment, and listened to their stories of sadness and loss. We saw firsthand not only the severe damage the earthquake caused to the homes and buildings, but we also felt the profound grief the people experienced and the way they pulled together to help each other.

At an area called "Olla común" we also experienced eating from the common pot. About 25 people gather

and bring a variety of foods to mix in this huge pot; they cook and serve their families together.

### **O**n February 23, a river flooded the nearby community of Alto Loran.

The homes of 28 families washed away along with their crops and livestock. We drove through the river to reach the people and deliver supplies. We brought a propane grill, food, water, shoes, and clothing to families relocated in a field in several tents.

Aside from the exhilarating experience of completing our initial project and assisting with others, we experienced a festival of dance, music and food in Chinchá. We traveled to



Jessica and Lana

## QUESTIONS

- 1 What do Jessica and Lana learn firsthand from their experience in Peru?
- 2 What communities and relationships make a difference in this story?
- 3 How have you, your family, friends, school, or parish helped people recover from disasters such as the earthquake in Haiti or the tornadoes in the U.S.?
- 4 What does the community gathered behind locked doors fear?
- 5 What does Jesus send forth his followers to do?
- 6 What is valuable about Thomas's questioning and wanting firsthand experience of touching Jesus' wounds?

Machu Picchu, an Inca city in the mountains that is one of the seven wonders of the world.

As our trip drew to an end, I realized I was beginning another journey. I hope to come back to visit with Hermana Gloria, Hermana María, and the special friends we made. I have learned never to take anything for granted and never be afraid to experience new things.

# Jesus calls us to new life.

**H**ave you ever been in a situation where people have a perception of you that is completely off-base? They may make assumptions about you because of how you look, because of stories they have heard, because of something you did that they misinterpreted.

Have you perhaps got a new job, only to work with an adult who assumes teenagers all have an attitude, or are lazy, or never know anything? Have you joined a team but never got to play the right position to show what you can do? Perhaps the person who misses who you really are is someone who knew you when you were younger and can't understand that you have changed and grown.

Breaking through other people's false assumptions can be tough. Sometimes other people's negative beliefs about us tempt us to start living them out.

If you're in a group of students who assume you are boring, you can find yourself saying dumb things. If you're among classmates who assume you're shallow, you may come out with

a comment that confirms their beliefs.

It's hard to be ourselves in situations that seem hostile. The people in our lives who see us for who we really are, or better yet, who see our best selves, can be miracle workers for us. A teacher who recognizes that we really can learn how to do math. A friend who knows we are funny. A sister or brother who has seen us at our worst and loves us anyway.



**J**esus can be a person in our lives who helps us see our best selves. In Sunday's gospel his scared followers find him in their midst, giving them peace and breathing the Holy Spirit upon them. He forgives

their sins and failings and sends them forth to be a community that forgives and cares for others—to be his witnesses in the world.

Awakening people to who they are is one of Jesus' best things. Mary Magdalene recognizes she is a valuable human being. Peter discovers that he can be a courageous leader even though he denied knowing Jesus during the passion. Thomas discovers his questions lead to faith and awe in the risen Jesus' presence.



**Each baptized person must stand before the world as a witness to the resurrection and life of the Lord Jesus and as a sign that God lives.**

*Constitution on the Church, #38.*

Jesus sees the beauty in every person. Regardless of others' perceptions of us, he knows our talents, our fears, our struggles, our undiscovered gifts. Today's writer, Jessica, gained confidence when she realized she shouldn't be afraid to experience new things.

Spending time with people who affirm us helps us know ourselves better and live into our abilities. Friends, family, teachers, coaches, Jesus—all can help us see ourselves as we truly are and as we can be. Jesus sends us as God sent him: to live the power of love and forgiveness in our world.



## FAITH in ACTION

- 1 Name three positive qualities you have that aren't about appearance, sports, or grades.
- 2 Look around for a beautiful person you haven't yet discovered, and have a conversation.
- 3 Stand up when you hear an unkind conversation about someone. A simple phrase to interrupt the flow is, "That makes me uncomfortable."