Very early on a November morning a small group of pilgrims walked through the narrow streets of Jerusalem to the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. We came into a fairly small square at the front doors of the church in the dim light of the autumn dawn. It wasn’t difficult to imagine what happened in that space twenty centuries earlier as a small group of women came to the same place to anoint the dead body of Jesus. The physical appearance of the area has changed in the two thousand years that separated us, but, there was the tomb and there was Calvary.

Our faith brought the years together and helped us realize that we and the women of the gospel shared a sense of what had happened where we stood. For the women, their lives would never be the same; they were beginning to live with the fact of Jesus’ resurrection. For us pilgrims, there was the hope that, like the women, our lives would know a change – that we would begin to live more fully the realization that we too now live with the fact of Jesus’ resurrection. The point is that Jesus’ resurrection brings about a wonderful change in all who come to a faithful realization that He is risen.

At the Last Supper Jesus asks of His Father: “I pray also for those who will come to know me through these who are gathered with me around this table.” As we continue to learn the place of the resurrection in each of us, we can feel completely at home in that prayer when we contemplate Jesus in His victory over suffering and death.

The Scriptures of these initial days of the Easter Season begin to show us some specifics of the change that takes place in the life of all who believe. The author of the Acts of the Apostles expresses it: “The community of believers was of one heart and mind.” The ongoing miracle of Easter is the creation of the community we know as the Church. For the early Christians it was a startlingly different way of life: “no one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they had everything in common.” For us, the change can renew society itself.

Because there was this wonderful change in the early church, “With great power the apostles bore witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great favor was accorded them all.” The community which is the Church has the power to bring that same change to all who begin to experience the reality of Christ’s resurrection. With those with whom we share life we can begin to discover the miracle of our becoming “of one heart and mind.” It is the gift begun through our baptism and lived out in all the sacraments, but particularly in our gathering at Eucharist.

Within the Eucharist we enter into the mysteries of Christ’s death and resurrection. When we can find in our participation in the Eucharist Christ’s risen life, we can begin to experience that reality of community in Him. We can begin to know the answer to Christ’s prayer at the Last Supper:
“Father, may they be one as we are one; may they be one in us.” In the answer to that prayer of Jesus we may find that unity with one another in Him who, becoming human, asks us to find one another in Him and Him in one another.

Hopefully, the description of the early Christian community can be found even in the Christian communities of today: “There was no needy person among them, for those who owned property or houses would sell them, bring the proceeds of the sale, and put them at the feet of the apostles, and they were distributed to each according to need.” We may not be selling our homes, but we may find ourselves ever more anxious to respond ever more generously to the needs of the hungry and homeless.

As we hear in the gospel, Thomas asked that he might touch the wounds of Christ before he would believe, and Jesus took him at his word: “Put your finger here and see my hands, and bring your hand and put it into my side, and do not be unbelieving, but believe.” Thomas, no longer doubting, professes his faith with wonderful clarity: “My Lord and my God.” Thomas’ expression of faith becomes the occasion of Jesus’ commendation of our faith when Jesus replies: “Have you come to believe because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed.” Can we find ourselves in those who are so blessed?

The mercy of God has brought us into the reality of His Church and commends the faith we bring. This day of the Church’s year has recently been designated Divine Mercy Sunday. We celebrate the Mercy that is Jesus, His love expressed in suffering and death and His call to us to live in the community of His love which is the Church. His love lives now in us. Our efforts in faith to assist the least among us become the living expression of Jesus’ love in this present time and place - what a powerful answer to the madness of terrorism and brutality that plague our world today.

We can find ourselves in the company of the women who first came to the empty tomb. We can live in their company as they found the Risen Lord in one another and as we find Him as we gather at this and every Eucharist. As we ever more increase our efforts to find Christ in the needy in our own lives, we can bring His love to a world that drifts now into violence and a loss of faith. We can join the company of Thomas as we hear our faith affirmed: “Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed.” This is what should happen to us who celebrate Easter; have we begun?