

Divine Mercy Sunday, April 19, 2009, Cycle B

Doubting Thomas...that moniker has marked anyone who has ever been skeptical of anything... and has left somewhat of an **undeserved** bad mark on the reputation of one of the Twelve Apostles.

Yet Thomas was a great and important Apostle. Did you know He was **perhaps** the only Apostle who went outside the [Roman Empire](#) to preach the Gospel. He also crossed the largest area, which includes [Persia](#), [India](#) and China.

He is the Patron Saint of Architects and of India.

The point here is that Thomas was a great Apostle, yet he had doubts.

Now before I go on, I want you to know that doubt **can** be a good thing.

- It is a normal emotion or feeling.
- It can keep us safe and free from errors in actions and thought.
- It can even be helpful in discerning our own faith or certain aspects of the faith.

- If we do not at least have questions, we'll never seek an answer. And while faith does not depend on proof, there **are** just enough proofs and truths to bolster, strengthen and solidify our faith.
- If our faith has not had concrete, positive effects in our lives, that is, if it has not been proven to ourselves, it would be very difficult in our wounded human nature to hold tight to it.

(PAUSE)

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For the past couple of weeks, Fr. has spoken about Ignatian Prayer. I

It is one aspect of a beautiful tradition of the Church that we call Lectio Divina. Lectio Divina calls one to study, ponder, listen and, finally, to pray and even sing and rejoice from God's Word, within the soul.

It is to this style of prayer that I often apply the 5 W's that we learned about in school.

The 5 W's.....Who, What, When, Where and Why are usually associated with the necessary components of a good journalistic story or report.

Scripture is many things, but never a newspaper article. It would usually make a poor newspaper article because in any given story, or event one or more of the W's are often missing or incomplete.

these missing "W's" are one of the **many** things that keeps Scripture alive in our hearts and relevant to our times as these are the opportunities when **we** in union with the Church, need to supply the "W".

Let us examine three of the missing "W's" in today's Gospel.

Where was Thomas?

Scripture doesn't say, so speculation is all we have.

One possibility is that he was standing guard, watching for those who might come to arrest the disciples. This is both a practical and plausible assumption. But it isn't of much value to us, is it?

(PAUSE)

However, just as plausible,.... perhaps.... he.... just.....wantedto..be.. left..... alone.

(PAUSE)

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Haven't we all felt like that, especially when something tragic has happened in our lives?

We need time to process, to possess our hurt and work through the emptiness, the depression and sadness in **our** lives, so why would we expect Thomas be any different?

Thomas had just witnessed everything he had lived for over the past three years... taken, destroyed....wiped out in the scourging, Crucifixion and death of Jesus.

(PAUSE)

But in the midst of his grief, his friends, his fellow disciples claim to have seen Jesus alive.

Yet Thomas refused to believe.

We criticize Thomas for demanding proof, but honestly, wasn't he just asking for what the others already had, some form of proof of the impossible?

Hadn't they claimed to see the same wounds he asked to touch?

(PAUSE)

The next "W" is this: Why did he doubt?

I think he wanted to believe, I really do. I think he may have been **afraid** to believe.

Perhaps the hurt he felt was so tremendous, that he could not bare the **greater** hurt of believing, hoping, being joyful again, only to fall into **deeper despair** if it was all a hoax, or an illusion.

How many of us have been there?

Anyone who has known the hurt of living with a person they love and trust that is also addicted to alcohol or drugs or is abusive can tell you how deep it cuts to have so many

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promises broken, and at some point, we have to stop the hurting even if it means lying to ourselves. Doubt in this context is not necessarily healthy, but it does the trick.....for awhile.

(PAUSE)

It was not his doubt that made Thomas so great an Apostle, but rather his doubt that had been **transformed to** great hope in an encounter with the Risen Jesus.

The encounter was so blessed, so intense and so deeply personal that he was able to make one of the greatest statements of faith recorded in the Scriptures, "My Lord and my God".

But even at this great moment, there is an apparent rebuke by Jesus to Thomas : "Have you come to believe because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed."

I say apparent rebuke, because I am not so sure that it is one.

Jesus does not condemn Thomas for his desire of proof. In fact he **mercifully** gives him the very proof he asks for.

Also note that Jesus does not say that those who have **not** seen Him, yet believe are any **MORE BLESSED** than Thomas. And we can say with confidence one is not less blessed than Thomas.

(PAUSE)

This brings me to a very important question, our third "**W**", if you will..... that can be helpful to us in understanding this Gospel:

Who are we.....the Thomas who believes because we have **seen**, or the ones blessed because we have **not seen** and still believe?

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I think we are a nice mix of both, but not in the sense that Bob is blessed by seeing and Jane is blessed by NOT seeing.

We have not seen or touched the Glorified Jesus in the room with the other Apostles, but we have **seen** and **touched** Him none-the-less.

(PAUSE)

At Baptism, our eyes and ears were opened to the gift of faith.

Faith is the **merciful** gift and loving **action** of God.

In fact it is his **mercy** that we rejoice in today because, as sinners, we are so very undeserving of any good from God, yet that is what he gives us in super abundance!

Good and love and forgiveness and redemption and salvation and grace and mercy... which are rightly ordered to each other in such a way that God cannot give one without showering us with the others.

And he **allows** us to see Him.

In faith, given at Baptism and nurtured by the Holy Spirit and His Church we have the ability to experience the Risen Jesus like Thomas couldn't... even... imagine..... at the moment of his Holy Encounter.

- We **see** Him, **touch** Him, **taste** Him in the Holy Eucharist, which **is** the body, blood, soul and divinity of the once crucified and now forever living..... Jesus.
- We **hear** Him in the Living Word and hopefully, even in the Homily proclaimed at each Mass.
- We **behold** him in our Priest as he stands in the very **person** of Christ to confect the Eucharist with his consecrated hands and heart.

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- We **smell** Him in the heady aroma of his Precious Blood.
- We **hear** him speak sweet words of healing and encouragement and forgiveness through our priest in the Sacrament of Reconciliation.
- And if we take just a moment to look around us, with open eyes and willing hearts , we can **see** and **touch** and **hear** the mystical body of Christ gathered here today.

(PAUSE)

Nothing is missing of Jesus among us. Not even His sacred wounds.

(SHORT PAUSE)

My Friends, if we are to fully be a part of Jesus, we **must do** as Thomas did, at Jesus' own gentle command.....we must touch His wounds.

Yet when we look for the wounds, we seldom see them in the places we would **think** to find them. They are not in the Sacraments. They are in the Mass, but not in a tangible way.

Christ's wounds are in **us** and **everyone we know and have yet to meet.**

Because of the fall of Adam, we are all wounded.....and waiting...longing.... to be touched.

So, the only authentic way we have to touch the nail marks, the only way to place our hands into His side is to enter into another person's life.

I pray we do this with the same reverence and awe and joy and fear and even trembling that Thomas must have felt when He touched our Blessed Savior's wounds.

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Sometimes this is done by visiting the sick. Maybe we attend to the dying. Perhaps we volunteer our time and talents to a homeless shelter or a soup kitchen, or a food pantry or a women's shelter.

For many, this kind of action can be difficult. We think we are out of our element, when in reality, most likely we are **exactly** where God wants us.

(PAUSE)

Yet, we **most often** touch His wounds in things and moments that seem smaller, but they are as big as the sky.

- When we listen to our child who just had their heart broken.
- When we hold the hand of our spouse, at just the right time!
- When we honor our parents.
- When we simply listen to our neighbor, co-worker and friends sincerely and with a loving heart.
- When we enter into solidarity with those among us who have lost their jobs or homes,
- or the immigrant who had to leave family behind to try to earn enough money to support that same family.
- When we weep with those who weep, suffer with those who suffer and yes, celebrate with those who have found reason to celebrate.
- When we extend mercy, work for even the smallest justice and fight for those who cannot defend themselves.

THAT.....that is when we touch the wounds of Christ!

(Longer PAUSE)

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Very soon, we shall have the opportunity to receive the Living Christ in Holy Communion. In this we find our strength, our hope, our courage and our joy.

The nourishment from this altar and from this ambo fills us, in fact it has the power to abundantly fill us, so that we are overflowing with **His** Mercy and Grace. This gift is as personal as the gift Thomas received and is given to each of us, for ourselves.... and... for... others and that is good... and that is Holy.

Then, filled with the mercy and love of our God, alive with His blood coursing in our veins, we are **almost..... suddenly** dismissed.

We are dismissed, that is sent... to witness the Risen Jesus **in** everyone we meet and **to** everyone we meet.

We are sent to touch the wounds of Christ and proclaim Him, as Tomas did....to all who will hear....

"My Lord and My God"