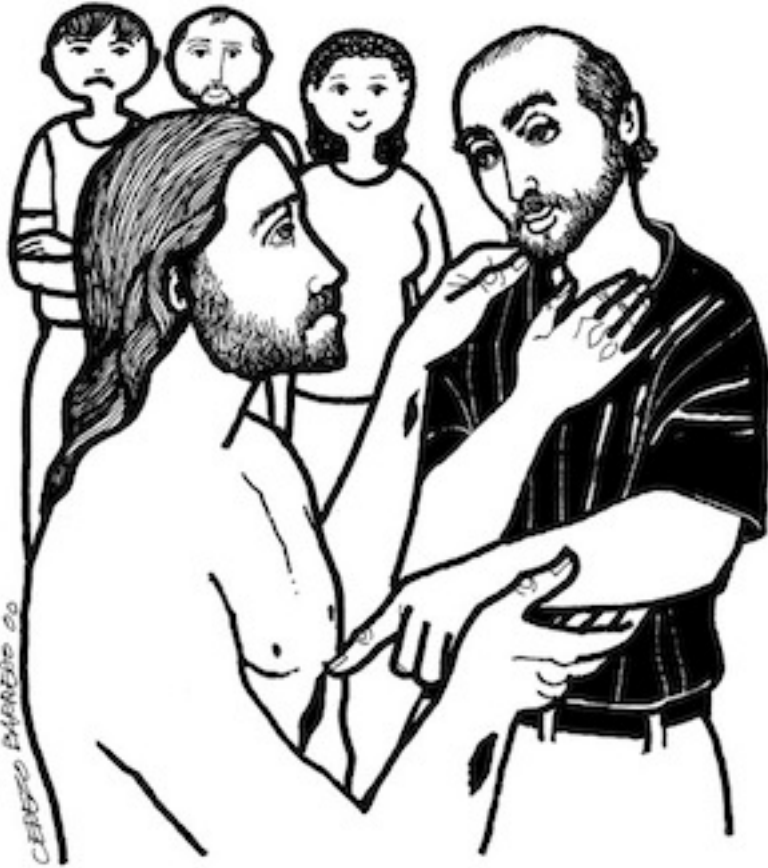


commentary to the 2nd Sunday of Easter C



Afraid and Doubting; Yet Still Believing

Poor Thomas always gets bad press the Sunday after Easter. We are always focusing in on his doubts. We often think that he was the only one who did not believe that the Lord had risen from the dead. The fact is that most of the disciples doubted the Lord's resurrection until they experienced His presence. Only the apostle John, the Beloved Disciple, appears to have believed the Lord had risen before he ever encountered the Risen Lord. If you remember, after Mary Magdeline reported what she had seen that Easter Sunday morning, Peter and John ran to the tomb. John outran Peter, but waited and let Peter go in first. When John went in, the Gospel says, "He saw, and He believed." Peter, still, did not know what to think.

Like Peter, the other disciples did not know if they should believe Mary and John. Peter reported that the tomb was empty. Perhaps in some macabre act, someone had stolen the Lord's body. Certainly, there appeared to be no limit to the despicable activity of the chief priests and pharisees when it came to the Lord. So, they all doubted. Initially. Later that day Jesus appeared to Peter and the other disciples, except for Thomas who was not present.

When Jesus appeared that day He came to the disciples in the same Upper Room where they had celebrated the Passover the Thursday before. The door was locked. Why? The disciples were afraid, frightened to be exact. Jesus had not just been killed; he had suffered one of the most horrible deaths known to mankind. Would the same thing happen to them? They were frightened. In their fear, they began doubting the Lord. Maybe He was just a wonderful, powerful prophet, but nothing more. And then He appeared to them. That's when they realized that this was more than just a new message, a new prophecy. Jesus Himself was the message. He was the Son of God. His Gospel had power, the Power of God.

Thomas was not there. He doubted the other disciples' story. He even doubted the word of the Lord, who had said He'd rise again. When he saw Jesus, Thomas' reaction was the same of the other disciples, best expressed in his statement, "My Lord and My God." Jesus Christ is Lord and God. There is no need to be afraid.

This is true also for us. We are often afraid. This is normal, part of our human condition. Beneath the fear there is doubt. Will God really take care of me and my family? Does He really care? Does He really exist? Where is He now that I need Him so much.

We go through periods of joy and periods of stress. Sometimes we say, "Life is good. I love what I am doing. I have people I love. And I am loved by others." Or you might say, "I have a great marriage. The children are work, but I can't stop smiling when I think about them, even when they are driving me crazy." Or for our younger people, "I really like school. I have friends. I have activities that are fun. Life is good." That is how we feel sometimes. And then there are times that we seem to go from one crisis to the next. We are confronted with death, sickness, unemployment, actions of others that disappoint us, and our own actions that upset us. There is stress in relationships. And we wonder about God. "Where is He?" we ask. And, yes, like Thomas and the others, there are still times that we are afraid, that we question, that we doubt.

Our Loving Lord knows and understands. He was one of us. Jesus knows what it is like to be afraid. He was afraid in the Garden of Olives. He sweat blood. But He also trusted in the Power of His Father and our Father and did not let these fears change His determination to do the will of the Father. He sees us when we are afraid. He understands.

He also gives us the ability to get up from our fears and do the right thing. This is Divine Mercy Sunday. The rays that come from the heart of Jesus remind us of the blood and water that came from His heart. The blood destroys the power that evil has over us. The water revives us through baptism.

He sees, He knows, He understands. Yes, it is human to be afraid. And it is human to doubt. Perhaps we feel horrible for doubting Him. His mercy and compassion are stronger than our doubts.

No matter what we are facing in life today, or will face tomorrow, joy or challenge, we look to Jesus; we remember His mercy and compassion, and we join Thomas in saying, “My Lord and My God.”

Fr. Joseph Pellegrino